

PRO WRESTLING 1993



**VADER: MVP OF THE YEAR,
HEEL OF THE YEAR, MATCH OF THE YEAR**



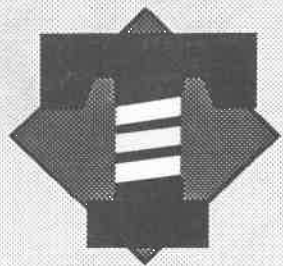
**BRET HART: BEST BABYFACE,
FEUD OF THE YEAR**



**JIM CORNETTE: SUIT OF THE YEAR,
MANAGER OF THE YEAR**

PRO WRESTLING TORCH 1993 YEARBOOK
EDITOR/PUBLISHER: WADE D. KELLER

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PRO WRESTLING 1993

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Welcome to the sixth annual *Pro Wrestling Torch Yearbook*—titled “Pro Wrestling 1993.” I must begin by thanking everyone who helped make this yearbook possible and the last year of publishing the *Torch* as fulfilling as it has been, including the subscribers, correspondents, and columnists. Special thanks to those who took time to contribute their year-end award ballots and in some cases, comments on those picks. Now on to a summary of what you’ll find herein...

On the other side of this page begins the “Top 50 Stories of the Year” feature. After a brief introduction and summary of 1993, a full page is dedicated to each of the top ten stories of the year including up-to-date analysis as of Feb. 26, 1994, just days before the initial mailing of this book with comments on how each of the stories is likely to change the year 1994. Then comes a list of stories 11–50 with comments on each. This is the third year we have put together a list of the top 50 stories of the year compiled with the help of an impromptu committee of wrestling journalists and writers. A far from scientific list, it does put into perspective the impact certain events in 1993 had on the wrestling industry in the United States.

The next major feature is the sixth annual “Torch Year-End Awards” as decided by ballots cast by *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* readers. A full-page is dedicated to each of the 12 primary awards including columnist picks and comments, selected reader comments, and the editor’s picks. Not only are the top ten finishers in each of the primary 12 categories listed, but the top three finishers in the last five years are also listed. The secondary categories, nos. 13–42, are then listed with the top three finishers in each category. Past winners in these categories are listed in the appendix.

The second annual *Pro Wrestling Torch* listing of “Pro Wrestling’s Ten Most Powerful People” comes up next. There were some major shifts from last year, although the top spot remained solidly in the hands of Vince McMahon Jr. Each of the top ten people is analyzed, discussing what made them powerful, why they shifted up or down compared to ’92, and where they likely will end up on next year’s list. As an added element, positions 11–15 are also listed. This list was compiled by an impromptu board of people who include wrestling writers and journalists and people actively working in the wrestling industry. The list is compiled based on the power each person had as of Dec. 31, 1993. Last year’s top ten are also listed.

The second annual *Pro Wrestling Torch* “Top 100 Worldwide Ratings” comes up next with more elements and analysis than last year. This year’s list includes perspective on where each wrestler placed last year, which wrestlers dropped off the list this year and why, who made the biggest jumps up and down the list, and which promotions featured the most wrestlers in the top 25 and top 100. There is a large element of subjectivity built into any ratings list in professional wrestling, but the list was compiled by some staunch observers and participants in the wrestling industry who see wrestling tapes from around the world year-round to provide a respectable ranking of the talents in this sport.

Torch columnist Bruce Mitchell returns with his biting, sarcastic “Year-End Quiz.” Who are his victims this year? Whose blunders, hypocrisy, stupidity, and ineptitude will be part of this year’s quiz? Mitchell left out few this year, even going after the *Torch*’s own writers and its editor.

Torch columnist and resident Japan wrestling expert Chris Zavisa walks us through the year in Japanese wrestling, including the ranking of each of the top promotions in Japan, key events and dates throughout each of their years, ratings of the top men and women wrestlers, a listing of American wrestlers on tour in Japan throughout 1993, and a listing of the most successful events in Japan. If you follow Japan closely, this article puts a complicated year into perspective. If you’ve been meaning to learn more about the Japan wrestling scene, but are confused or overwhelmed by the unfamiliar names and multitude of promotions, this article can be the foundation on which you build.

Torch columnist Mark Madden takes a look at a very pressing, serious issue being debated even today in wrestling circles—and once and for all, Madden will put the issue to rest—when he analyzes who is better: Ultimate Warrior or Sid Vicious.

For this year’s “Torch Talk Special,” I interviewed wrestling legend Ted DiBiase, who now that he’s out of in-ring action with an injury, reflects on his career, his future, and the current state of wrestling. This was one of my favorite “Torch Talks” to date and I look forward to sharing it with you.

Closing out the yearbook is a new feature I’m excited about. The first ever yearbook “Appendix” which includes listings of key events of the year, title changes, rosters and real names, a glossary of insider wrestling terms, and more. I look forward to your feedback about this new addition.

The real judgement of this yearbook’s quality comes from you, although I believe this to be the best *Torch* yearbook to date. Your feedback is important and sincerely invited. I look forward to another year of *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* and hope you stay aboard for the ride. —W.K.

THE TOP

50

Nineteen-ninety-three was more than anything a sign that wrestling's downtrend would not continue at the alarming rate it did from 1989 to 1992. WWF arena attendance has held steady averaging around 3,500 since August 1992. From January '92 to August '92 it dropped from 6,500 to 3,250, most notably due to the outpouring of media scrutiny and the semi-retirement of Hulk Hogan. WCW arena attendance dropped from 1,600 to 650 in 1993, not a good trend at all, but one that WCW was beginning to make efforts to reverse in 1994.

Meanwhile, television ratings held steady overall for both groups, with the WWF finding particular success with Monday Night Raw. Pay-per-view buyrates for WCW bottomed out at about 0.50%, suggesting WCW's core pay-per-view audience is about 100,000. The WWF averaged about 1.25%, ranging from the 0.82 Survivor Series got to the 2.01 Wrestlemania IX got. Both groups relied heavily on pay-per-views for their revenue, with WCW losing money at arena events and making up for it on pay-per-views, while the WWF drew similar revenue streams from arenas and pay-per-views, around \$19 million and \$16.5 million respectively.

As the United States wrestling industry looked ahead to 1994, it saw the pending trial of wrestling's most powerful person, Vince McMahon. It saw the possibility of further expansion into the U.S. by foreign promotions, including UWFI, AAA, All Japan Women, and an array of other possibilities.

As 1994 began, WCW's front office morale was on an upward swing after the acquisitions of Bobby Heenan and Gene Okerlund and the re-signing of Jesse Ventura to the announcing team, the hiring of Zane Bresloff to help the struggling arena business, and upcoming innovations on their production values for their cable programs. WCW wrestlers' morale was on a downward swing. They were faced with cutbacks byt management, fewer bigtime contracts, and a feeling that management didn't know how to best utilize the most talented wrestlers on WCW's roster—plus, there was resentment toward the announcers' salaries.

One positive coming out of 1993 was the survival and growth of Smoky Mountain Wrestling and early signs that Eastern Championship

Wrestling would become a staple in the Philadelphia area. Despite Jerry Lawler's rape indictment, the USWA continued on its weekly course, promoting in an old-school style with moderate success—i.e. enough to keep them afloat.

By the end of 1993 it became an accepted practice, but WCW's exposing of its future big-match finishes was a controversial topic for much of the latter part of the year. With WCW's syndicated tapings taking place once every three months, future storylines including major title changes were revealed ahead of time. By the time WCW taped at Disney in early 1994, it had done a better job of covering up future storylines. Meanwhile, the WWF was far from innocent when it came to giving away finishes as early in 1994 it gave a strong indication that Lex Luger would become the WWF Champion at Wrestlemania.

While Vince McMahon showed more vulnerability in 1993 than ever before, Eric Bischoff rose from WCW's deep announcing crew to become the second most powerful man in professional wrestling. Bischoff was the man behind the controversial Disney tapings. He also was behind the controversial mini-movies that embarrassed WCW wrestlers in the summer. He will be a key person to watch in 1994.

Nineteen-ninety-three also saw the deaths of some wrestling legends, most notably international superstar Andre the Giant and young stud Kerry Von Erich. Others to be remembered are: Joe McHugh (46), former WWF ring announcer; Dino Bravo (44), big name AWA, WWF, and Canadian wrestler; Wally Karbo (77), longtime partner and promoter with Verne Gagne's AWA; Little Coco (Stanley Littlejohn, 40), midget wrestler most famous for being shaved by Roddy Piper on WWF television; David "D.J." Peterson (33), independent talent who died in a motorcycle accident; Don Kent (60), member of the famous Fabulous Kangaroos tag team with Al Costello; Phil Zacko (87), promoter for the WWWF in the Philadelphia area; Rufus R. Jones (Carey Lloyd, 60), big name wrestler in the South and Midwest; and Larry Cameron (41), died of medical complications during a wrestling match.

We kick off our top ten stories of the year—followed by a listing of 11–50—with a recap and analysis the McMahon indictments.

STORIES OF 1993

Places future of WWF in doubt, cutbacks follow

PRO WRESTLING 1993 — 3

KERRY VON ERICH DIES

Suicide marks end to superstar's life, families legacy

What a life it was. The best of times on camera, the worst of times off camera. Kerry Von Erich ended the worst of times on Feb. 18, 1993 on his father's ranch with a gunshot to his chest. He was 33.

Kerry Von Erich, real name Kerry Adkisson, was a teen idol until the day he died. He had a chiseled physique, a charisma second to few in the history of pro wrestling, and a face of a Greek god. What he didn't have was the ability to handle all the success and fame that his talents and looks and family name brought him.

Kerry was the youngest of three brothers who were the driving force behind a major chapter in the expansion of wrestling in the '80s. He, Kevin, and David were a threesome that first took their home market of Dallas, Tex. by storm, and later through national syndication took the nation by storm, airing in 66 markets and several international markets.

Unfortunately, like much of professional wrestling, what brought them fame was feigned. They were not the wholesome, religious family that was portrayed on television. With most notably rampant drug use, they drifted in and out of reality in more ways than one. Kerry escaped the pressures of fame through drug use and he escaped the problems that drug use caused by being a famous Von Erich.

"It was a strange situation," Jim Cornette said in a 1990 "Torch Talk." "Here they were, this really screwed up family, and nobody would even mention it, not even to each other. I guess keeping up the image is most important."

Every time Kerry and his brothers got into trouble, their father would help cover it up. Amazingly, the Von Erich image stood strong, even after the death of David in 1984. Reported to be death by inflammation of the liver, he actually died of a drug overdose.

The family never recovered, but the wholesome image was saved. At the inaugural "David Von Erich Memorial" at Texas Stadium May 6, 1984, Kerry became the second youngest NWA World Heavyweight Champion. He defeated Ric Flair in front of 32,123, "inspired by the memory of his brother." He lost the belt back to Flair three weeks later, but his career continued strong, as did his out of ring problems.

Mike Von Erich, the next in the line of the Von Erich brothers, was promoted as David's replacement. It was said on television time and time again by Bill Mercer, "Mike is like a

younger version of his late older brother David." Mike was not a younger version of his brother David. Mike didn't want to be a wrestler, but he succumbed to family pressures and entered the ring. He was lost in the ring, yet he virtually never lost matches. He was lost outside of the ring, but that was countered by drug use—uppers, downers. Despite massive doses of steroids, it failed to offset his lack of physical maturity that made his in-ring—push lack credibility. Mike got in trouble with the law, was unable to live up to his family's and fans' expectations, and ended his own life with a drug overdose of Placidyl on Apr. 11, 1987.

Chris Von Erich, the youngest of the family of brothers, was only 5-5, 165. Even on steroids, he did not have the look of a credible professional wrestler. Add to that, severe asthma, and his prospects of replacing his brothers was not plausible. At age 21, Chris ended his life by shooting himself in the head on Sept. 12, 1991.

Kerry met and overcame tragedy of his own when he returned to the wrestling ring after losing part of his foot and nearly dying in a June 1986 motorcycle accident. He was driving barefooted at an unsafe speed wearing nothing but gym shorts. After a coverup that lasted until his death (his handicap was known within the industry for years) Kerry returned to the ring.

After his father's promotion, World Class Championship Wrestling, changed ownership several times and became a shell of its former

self, Kerry made the big move to the World Wrestling Federation. He had moderate success in the WWF, holding the WWF Intercontinental Title for a stretch under the ring name "Texas Tornado" (McMahon not prominently using the Von Erich name showed how much luster the family name had lost.) But his drug problems got him suspended from the WWF. After rehabilitation, he returned, claiming to be clean. He wasn't.

Adkisson was indicted Feb. 17, 1993 for cocaine possession. The next day, fearing living in jail and life without drugs to cover up his emotions over the loss of his brothers and the life he had been living, he committed suicide.

Kerry's probation officer said after the death that Kerry rejected advice to get counseling for suicidal feelings and his drug problem. "He said he was putting up a good fight, but it was tough. He said because of the world he was in, the wrestling world, the availability (of drugs) was just so convenient."

Current GWF promoter Grey Pierson talked to Kerry twice the day he killed himself. "He said he felt he'd never worked his way through the grief of the loss of his brothers," Pierson told the *Dallas Morning News*. " "

The oldest of the wrestling brothers, Kevin, remains alive, although he rarely wrestles now.

Kerry's life and death was an example of the dangers of being so engulfed in a worked industry where reality is often blurred by promotional hype. Kerry never had a chance to learn the difference between hype and reality.

Kerry along with his brothers were the victims of the rewards the wrestling industry perversely gave them in exchange for lying to fans, deceiving themselves, and never learning the difference between the hype and reality.

On a whole, the wrestling industry probably did not learn a lesson from the Von Erich tragedies. But there are many lessons to be learned. Fame, based on phony premises, worked matches, and drug-enhanced physiques should not be rewarded under any circumstances.

Unfortunately, the prevailing wisdom within wrestling is that Kerry was simply the next victim in a series of tragedies destined for his screwed up family.

That is true.

But without the rewards the wrestling business gave the family, reality might have hit the brothers before it was too late for them to face it.

3

ANDRE THE GIANT DIES

One of wrestling's all-time top draws dies in his sleep

Five years before his death, almost to the day, the largest wrestling audience in history watched Andre the Giant pin Hulk Hogan to capture the WWF Heavyweight Title.

It seems appropriate in retrospect that the largest audience in wrestling history saw the two biggest draws in history battle each other in the main event.

Andre the Giant, real name Andre Rousimoff, died in his sleep of an apparent heart attack on Jan. 27, 1993. Andre was in France. He traveled to his home country two weeks earlier to attend his father's funeral. After visiting with his family and returning to his hotel room, he died in bed. No autopsy was performed.

Andre's fame and fortune throughout his 28 year wrestling career did not come without a price. He suffered from acromegaly, a disorder marked by progressive enlargement of the head, face, hands, feet, and chest due to excessive secretion of growth hormones. His 6-10 frame and gentle giant looks helped make him one of the top two drawing cards in wrestling history.

Andre the Giant, by the early-'80s, was a drawing card because of size and reputation. Early in his career, Andre was a drawing card because of his size and in-ring ability. Never a great, or even a very good worker, Andre did have athletic mobility early in his years, including dives off the ropes.

"He was a super athlete, for his size, when he was still able to move," Superstar Graham told the *Wrestling Observer*. "For a man that huge, he was a little clumsy, but he was light on his feet. And he was a great worker in that he never hurt anyone. You'd never hear of anyone getting injured against Andre."

In latter years, he was a slow, plodding, immobile gimmick performer, a victim of his debilitating disease and two decades in the ring.

After dabbling in pro wrestling in France at age 18, Andre entered pro wrestling in 1969 touring Japan, billed at 7-0. He moved from Europe to Montreal where he lived while not on the road. Later, he moved to Ellerbe, N.C. where he raised longhorn sheep and quarterhorses on a 200-acre estate. He also owned and operated a restaurant in Canada in the '80s.

For all of Andre's problems related to the disease and really having no chance of ever blending into a crowd, he made the best of the situation he knew how—that was by living in a way opposite of the gentle giant image he had.

Wrestlemania III. The WWF drew a \$1.6 million live gate, \$5.2 million at 166 closed-circuit locations, and \$10.3 million nationally on pay-per-view. Hogan pinned Andre in center ring, marking Andre's first nationally televised loss. Although he had been pinned several times in his career beforehand, he was billed by the WWF as "undefeated."

Andre had been pinned by Antonio Inoki and Seiji Sakaguchi in Japan in 1974. Andre submitted to Inoki in June of 1986. Andre lost by pinfall and countout on several other occasions in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Andre, less than one year after getting pinned in front of 90,817 at the Silver Dome, pinned Hogan to win the WWF Title in the most watched wrestling match in history. The match, broadcast on NBC, was the first live wrestling on broadcast network television in 30 years. It drew 33 million viewers, a number that may never be approached again.

Andre, however, sold the WWF Title less than three minutes after winning it to Ted DiBiase. DiBiase wore the belt to the ring at several house shows billed as WWF Champion, but within two weeks, DiBiase was stripped of the title and he was never recognized officially as champion. Andre's reign, as short as it was, is officially recognized. He would go on to fight Hogan at Wrestlemania IV in a tournament for the held up title, ending with Randy Savage beating DiBiase to begin his first reign.

From there, Andre turned into a gimmick performer, standing on the ring apron through most of his WWF Tag Team Title defenses with partner Haku. Later, he was used to put over the Ultimate Warrior. Although not publicized on WWF television, Andre was pinned in less than one minute at a series of house shows against Ultimate Warrior. Before leaving the WWF and retiring from full-time competition, he turned babyface on Bobby Heenan.

"He was very personable," Terry Funk told the *Torch*. "Everybody has differences, but I can speak very highly of him. He always believed in this business. He was a hell of a guy and always did his best. One thing I believe is that he was bigger than Gorgeous George, bigger than Hogan. He was the biggest box office attraction this sport has ever seen."

People say there will never be another Hulk Hogan. That's debatable. But, without a doubt, there will never be another Andre the Giant.

"Andre was really living fast," Eduard Carpentier told the *Montreal Gazette*. "As soon as he started making money, he bought a big white cadillac and drove it all over town. He'd have a stogie in his mouth and had women draped all over him. I used to worry about him living so fast, but I guess he felt he didn't have a long time to live so he had to make the most of it."

Andre, though, was not a happy man in latter years. His demeanor changed from a high roller to solemn, almost angry.

"Andre was a real loner," John Studd told the *Torch*. "The last time I saw him, he was an angry man. I'd like to think the real Andre was the character played in (the movie) 'The Princess Bride'—a nice, big, gentle guy."

"Princess Bride" was Andre's only major role in a movie. *Entertainment Weekly* reviewed Andre's performance in a January 1994 issue. "Andre plays the resident goon in a band of thieves who kidnap the titular royal. Though he experiences some problems with enunciation, the big man pulls off this challenging role with energetic poise."

Andre's greatest fame in latter years came as a heel in a feud against Hulk Hogan. By then, due to his legendary drinking binges and love for food along with the effects of his disease, he had grown to 500 lbs.

Mar. 29, 1987, Andre the Giant challenged Hulk Hogan at the Pontiac Silver Dome at

HOGAN'S COMEBACK FLOPS

Wrestling's top star of '80s fails to spark interest in WWF

Whether it was due to the negative publicity stemming from his fib on Arsenio Hall, or a sign of the times, Hulk Hogan's star faded considerably in 1993.

Today, he is probably still potentially the biggest drawing card in the United States, but on a much smaller level than just three years ago.

It's clear today his downfall actually began on July 16, 1991. He was interviewed on the Arsenio Hall Show and was asked about steroids stemming from the high publicity generated by Dr. George Zahorian. Hogan said, "First off, what I am is what I am. I love my family. Love my god. I love all of my people that believe in me... I've trained 20 years, two hours a day, to look the way I do, but the things I am not, I'm not a steroid abuser and I do not use steroids."

He then said he used steroids only twice for strictly rehabilitative purposes in the early-'80s.

Understandably, the mainstream media laughed at his comments. Had Hogan admitted to being an abuser of steroids, he would have in a sense removed part of its stigma, because to admit something that technically was legal in some parts of the United States at the time (although not in Florida where he lived) might have displaced a lot of the uproar.

Instead, he didn't even say the sorry euphemism that he "tried steroids" at one time to help his physique. He flat-out lied. He in effect said he never once took steroids to enhance his physique. The media loves to expose a rich, famous hypocrite—especially when that person espouses to be a role model—when given the opportunity. Hogan gave them the opportunity.

The media barrage began shortly thereafter, peaking in the first quarter of 1992. The media barrage brought the WWF's troubles—both allegations of drug abuse and of sexual misconduct—to the attention of the government, which eventually led to indictments of Vince McMahon and Titan Sports in November 1993.

After the media barrage, the WWF billed Wrestlemania VIII as possibly Hogan's final match ever. Hogan never formally announced retirement, but hinted at it. In other words, if the media scrutiny of his past died down, he would return—barring huge success in Hollywood.

After a series of retrospects on Hogan's career on WWF television, Hogan defeated Sid Justice by DQ. His star, though, already showed signs of fading. At the Royal Rumble the previous

January, Hogan was booed against Sid Justice; Justice was turning heel at the time. Hogan's cheers were rivaled in some cities by cheers for Ric Flair in their matches against each other.

After Wrestlemania VIII, Hogan disappeared from the wrestling scene for the rest of the 1992.

He returned early in 1993. After taking almost an entire year off, Hogan's return should have led to a big boost in television ratings, buyrates, and arena attendance. He is, after all, the biggest wrestling attraction of this era, if not of all time. But Hogan's decision to return to the WWF came too late to put him in the lone main event spotlight in Wrestlemania IX advertising, so Hogan co-main evented Wrestlemania IX teaming with Brutus Beefcake against Ted DiBiase & I.R.S., sharing the spotlight with Yokozuna's title defense against Bret Hart.

That did not keep Hogan out of the Wrestlemania IX main event. He has yet to not be a key figure in any of the nine Wrestlemanias. Even when he wasn't in the main event at Wrestlemania IV, he hit DiBiase over the head with a chair leading to his loss to Randy Savage in the finals of the WWF Title Tournament.

This time, Hogan involved himself in the main event by becoming the main event. After Yokozuna defeated Bret Hart to capture the WWF Title, he came to ringside to protest Hart's loss—caused by Mr. Fuji throwing salt in Hart's eyes. Fuji challenged Hogan to an immediate match for the title. Hogan accepted.

Hogan entered the ring, Yokozuna grabbed

him, Mr. Fuji threw salt, Hogan ducked, the salt hit Yokozuna in the face, and a clothesline and a legdrop later, Hogan was the new WWF Champion.

Hogan, though, did not draw substantially more fans at the arenas in his defenses against Yokozuna. His title reign was enough of a flop that Hogan wanted out. He had a movie and television career to take care of. June 13 in Dayton, Ohio on the "King of the Ring" pay-per-view, Hogan had what is probably his final high-profile WWF match, losing the WWF Title by pinfall to Yokozuna. He wrestled a few more dates for the WWF, but Hogan and the WWF agreed to part ways June 15 after a dispute over the Hogan's future position in the WWF.

The WWF did not suffer because of Hogan's loss. In fact ten weeks later SummerSlam, main evented by Hogan's chosen replacement Lex Luger challenging Yokozuna, drew a bigger buyrate than Hogan vs. Yokozuna did in June.

While the June 13 match may have been Hogan's last big match for the WWF, his relationship with the WWF—believed to be in decent standing after leaving in June—came to an end on Oct. 16. On a live broadcast of "Radio WWF," Jim Ross interviewed Randy Savage, who openly criticized Hogan, calling him "the worst prima donna I've ever met in my life... I lost respect for Hulk Hogan big time when he completely lied on Arsenio Hall, denying the use of anabolic steroids except for rehabilitation for an injury... Hey, the children are our future, and if you're lying to them, you're lying to everybody... He hurt himself. I'm not worried about him hurting himself, but he hurt all of the World Wrestling Federation... But I guarantee you from the heart right now, he could (not) care less about hurting any of us at the World Wrestling Federation."

A Nov. 24, 1993 *New York Daily News* story reported that Hulk Hogan would be a key witness in the McMahon trial—testifying that McMahon did share steroids with him.

Although it was a bad year for Hogan in pro wrestling, his new television series, "Thunder in Paradise," will begin airing in syndication this year and is predicted to do well worldwide based on the success of "Baywatch," a similar show.

In 1993, Hogan's ability to carry a promotion was proven to be part of the past. But he shouldn't be entirely written off yet. There may be one more big match left in him—a WCW pay-per-view main event against Ric Flair.

5

WATTS FALLS, BISCHOFF RISES

Old school fails, new blood makes changes

In May 1992, then WCW vice president Kip Frey hired Bill Watts as WCW's vice president in charge of wrestling operations. Watts's hiring was hailed as a new, exciting beginning for WCW, a company which lacked a strong-handed, experienced wrestling person in a vice president position since the TBS buyout four years earlier.

For several years, especially during Jim Herd's reign as vice president of WCW, there were cries from within and outside the wrestling industry for Watts to be hired. Watts was known for his hard-hitting, episodic television programs when he headed Mid-South Wrestling in the early- and mid-'80s.

Watts campaigned for the WCW position in an interview in the summer of 1991. In a "Torch Talk" in the *Pro Wrestling Torch* Annual IV, Watts said he could fix WCW.

"I have a complete concept of wrestling in this country that is so totally awesome, it's unreal," Watts said. "All it would take is a couple of million dollars to get it going, but then it would be the biggest thing going. When wrestling has gone so far in one direction, you need to go in the totally opposite direction. The country is so hungry for it, it'd be unreal."

After he was hired, he told the *Torch*, "I see this as a chance to save wrestling. (Vince) McMahon turned wrestling into a cartoon that I'm not going to emulate. He made his money, but we're going to redefine what the public thinks of pro wrestling."

Everyone's enthusiasm began to disappear as Watts's heavy hand proved to be heavier than many thought necessary or appropriate. There were reports that he attempted to strong-arm wrestlers into signing away their current contracts in favor of lower paying contracts in exchange for bigger pushes.

There were accusations made, which Watts on the record would not deny, that he was cutting WCW's expenses, not because it would help the company in the long-run, but because he had bonus clauses in his contract that gave him a percentage of money saved by cutbacks.

Cosmetic moves such as lifting mats from ringside was stressed, as if that, rather than sensible booking and better performances by wrestlers, would lead to a turnaround in WCW's rapidly declining business.

Also a major criticism of Watts's tenure at the helm of WCW was the truly ridiculous push of his son. Watts tried to defend the push, but only

lost credibility in the process. Erik Watts, with no seasoning, was given a bigger push over a two or three month period than Sting ever received. Erik didn't win any titles, but he was pushed as a star, despite his lack of popularity, lack of in-ring seasoning, and lack of any semblance of charisma.

After being demoted a few weeks earlier, Watts resigned entirely on Feb. 10, by request of TBS executives.

Watts, in the summer 1991 "Torch Talk" espoused controversial comments about race relations that offended many, but more importantly brought into question his potential attitude and treatment of minority employees.

Watts said in the "Torch Talk": "It should be that, by god, if you're going to open your doors in America, you can discriminate. Why the f--ck not? That's why I went into business to discriminate! I mean really. I mean I want to be able to sell to who I want to and be able to serve who I want to. It's my business, it's my investment. So they come in and say no, I can't tell a f--g to get the f--ck out? I should have the right not to associate with a f--g if I don't want to. I mean, why should I have to hire a f--kin' f--g if I don't like f--gs? F--gs discriminate against us, don't they?... Lester Maddox was right, if I don't want to sell fried chicken to Blacks, I shouldn't have to. It's my restaurant."

Watts, late in 1992, appeared in the ring at a Clash of the Champions with TBS executive and former baseball great Hank Aaron. Madden,

interested in Aaron's comments on a TBS vice president in a position with hiring and firing power stating those views, faxed Aaron the interview. When Madden called Aaron back and asked for a reaction, the wheels were already turning on Watts being asked to resign. The next day, Watts resigned, later claiming the interview had nothing to do with his resignation.

Watts's history with hiring and pushing Blacks was strong, anecdotally speaking, in that he pushed Ron Simmons to WCW Title status and earlier in his career Junkyard Dog was his lead babyface. TBS, though, apparently feared having someone who says, "They went into business to discriminate" heading a division of their company—deciding on salaries, hiring, and firing—and running a division with a gay man in the front office.

Ole Anderson replaced Watts in a restructured WCW front office, Dusty Rhodes became a more powerful head booker, and Bill Shaw and Bob Dhue took a more active role in the company.

During Watts's tenure (June '92-Feb. '93) as compared to his predecessors Jim Herd and Kip Frey (June '91-Feb. '92), every major revenue generating figure dropped, as likely did expenses. Average attendance, as compiled by the *Wrestling Observer*, dropped from 1,639 to 1,594. The average house dropped from \$19,444 to \$14,158. Average cable ratings dropped from 2.53 to 2.04. The average pay-per-view buyrate was most stunning, dropping from 0.93% to 0.55%.

Since Watts's resignation, buyrate numbers have stayed steady around 0.50%, TV ratings have increased to the 2.18 range. House show attendance has dropped to under 750 on average.

In a surprise to the entire wrestling industry, the man partially responsible for the above numbers—for the most part holding steady, except for attendance—is Eric Bischoff, who rose from executive producer with little power to the senior vice president with decision-making power on all wrestling and television-related matters. "I went from deciding which way the lights pointed to in August controlling wrestling matters," Bischoff tells the *Torch*.

Bischoff has received mixed reviews so far, but is making changes and has publicly stated WCW will challenge the WWF for the top position in wrestling in 1994. His tenure, entering its fifth full month in January, is already one of the bigger stories of 1994.

6

SID, ARN FIGHT IN EUROPE

Both suffer serious stab wounds, WCW fires Sid

Sid (Vicious) Eudy's story differs from Arn Anderson's (real name Marty Lunde), but the results of the incident are indisputable. Both suffered stab wounds, both could have been killed, both were out of wrestling for several months, and only Anderson returned.

Because of the incident, Sid Vicious went from the front office favorite of WCW management ready for a main event at WCW's feature pay-per-view event and a WCW Title reign to a disliked, perceived-to-be dangerous and volatile individual who had never really proven himself as a drawing card.

Oct. 26, at approximately 2 a.m. at the Moat House Hotel in Blackburn, England, an argument in the hotel bar earlier turned into a near deadly brawl in Anderson's hotel room.

A variety of sources corroborated that Sid initiated the contact later that night by knocking on Anderson's hotel room door. From there, Sid claims Anderson began the fight. Anderson claims Sid started the fight.

In the end, Anderson suffered twenty stab wounds and Sid suffered four from a pair of scissors. Both were hospitalized and pressed charges, which were later dropped in favor of returning to the United States as soon as possible. WCW refused to comment until an investigation took place, and after the investigation, Sid no longer worked for WCW and Anderson returned to WCW in January.

In an interview in the *Wrestling Flyer Yearbook*, Sid said he thought WCW handled the story poorly. "They never came to an answer. They never said what they really found out. I think the reason why they never came out with it is because without a doubt my story was absolutely the only one with any credibility, from what evidence they had to go on."

Sid said Anderson initiated the argument earlier in the bar. "We were sitting there having some drinks. We were all at one table together at one point talking. We got to talking about things. I felt that maybe the conversation was getting a little too much for Arn. He chose to get away from the table, not wanting to answer some of the questions I was asking him. It got over to the bar where we started arguing a little bit, exchanging thoughts of each other. I was sitting on a bar stool. He came over to me one time and got in my face. I took my watch off, and he asked me, 'What are you going to do? Beat me up.' I said, 'No. But if you don't get out of my face, I will get you away from me.' At that point, he

PROWRESTLING TORCH

Double Whammy!

Sid, Arn stab each other in hotel in Europe

Both wrestlers pulled from tour and TV

Anderson (Vicious) and Sid Vicious (Arn) were both stabbed and injured during a fight in a hotel in Blackburn, England, on Oct. 26. Anderson suffered 20 stab wounds from a pair of scissors and Sid suffered four from a pair of knives. The fight was interrupted by police and medical personnel. Both wrestlers were hospitalized and pressed charges against each other, though the charges were later dropped.

McMahon, Zahorian on cover of NY Newsday

Justice Dept. investigation goes public

Wrestling's biggest star, Vince McMahon, and his son, Shane McMahon, were featured on the cover of the New York Newsday. The cover story focused on the investigation into the death of Shane McMahon's son, Shane McMahon, who was found dead in his hotel room in London. The investigation is ongoing.

moved maybe four feet away from me at the same bar we were sitting at. A few more things were said. Finally, he threw a beer mug full of beer in my face. At that point, everybody jumped in to get in between us... Arn didn't come at me and I didn't come at him. At that point Arn was saying some things like, "I'll cut your guts out with a beer bottle," and things like that.

"I got tired of waiting on my sandwiches so I went to my room, and they (the sandwiches) were in there. I remember eating part of the sandwich, sitting there like anybody else who's had too much to drink. I think anybody who had been hit in the face with a beer mug is going to have their feelings hurt and feel the need to vindicate themselves. I'm no different from anyone else after being insulted like that."

Sid says he then went and knocked on Anderson's door with part of a chair in his hand, which he said was padded and harmless. "I felt like a fool because I was talking to another fool on the other side of the door who's just as drunk or drunker than I was, and it had really gone too far... After that I remember slamming the chair down and taking no more than two steps away from the door, back towards my room. I turned around. Arn's there, really almost on me right away. I remember looking at Arn and the first thing I noticed was that he had something in his hand... I remember saying, 'Hey Arn, this has gone too far.' At about that time, he jabbed me with the scissors."

Sid said they fought in Anderson's hotel room

doorway and he got a hold of the scissors. "I remember grabbing the scissors," he said. "I don't remember stabbing him one time."

Sid says he isn't sorry for what he did and he would do it again because he was defending himself. Sid said he doesn't drink alcohol much and he can easily get drunk on a few beers.

Eye-witnesses at the bar described a different scene, describing the conversation as going something like this: Sid: You and that other old man (Ric Flair) should retire and let me have the spotlight so we can do some business. Arn: That would be great if you weren't all plugged full of juice and if you could work a lick and if you had ever drawn a house in your life.

Anderson's story has only come out through second hand versions of what he told friends and colleagues. It says that Sid knocked on Anderson's hotel room door in a rage, hit Arn with part of a chair, and the brawl began with scissors getting involved during the fight and Arn using them as self-defense.

WCW wrestler 2 Cold Scorpio broke up the fight. On the Jan. 22 *WrestleRadio U.S.A.* on WMSX (Brockton, Mass.), he talked about the incident. "It started in the hotel room and ended up in the hallway. It was just two guys who couldn't take any more, but as far as I know it was Sid who initiated it. I walked in on a whole lotta guys sitting down in the hallway brawling and Sid was on top with the advantage... All I was able to do was step in, push 'em apart, and try to hold 'em off... Later on Arn thanked me for everything I had done for him. I hate to see Sid not working right now because he does have a natural talent for the act of wrestling."

Anderson filed a lawsuit against Sid on Jan. 25 in Superior Court of Mecklenburg (N.C.) County seeking damages "in excess of \$10,000," the maximum level one can ask for.

Sid, meanwhile, is not wrestling professionally. He is apparently on friendly terms with WCW management, who he says have told him he will eventually be brought back. He is not well-liked by many top wrestlers in WCW. Given the WWF's current aggressive steroid testing policy and Sid's aversion to testing in the past, he is not likely to show up in the WWF this year—certainly not before the May trial. Instead, be it 'roid rage (which Sid denies) or a fight between two intoxicated men, the incident nearly killed two men, cost one wrestler his job, and changed the main event of WCW's top show of the year.

INTERNATIONAL INVASION

AAA and UWFI find sporadic success in U.S.

The wrestling industry has thrived for years in various parts of the world. Each area of the world developed its own style of wrestling. Europe featured a more mat-oriented style with rounds like in boxing. Mexico developed an acrobatic style with a lot of masked wrestlers. Japan featured a realistic, high-paced style that eventually expanded into a wide variety of styles.

As the United States professional wrestling industry fights to find a winning formula during this recession in business, two foreign promotions have come into this country and found moderate and sporadic, but promising success.

Oct. 5, the "shoot-style" wrestling organization UWFI broadcast on pay-per-view on a one-day delay the first non-American-based wrestling event on United States cable. WCW had broadcast some specials from their combined Tokyo Dome shows with New Japan, but featuring matches with WCW wrestlers fighting New Japan wrestlers in a style similar to traditional U.S. matches.

The UWFI, without aid of a previous reputation, television exposure, or any known stars, drew what initially was reported to be around 100,000 buys, in the range of what WCW draws. Since then, those numbers have come into question and there is no reliable official guide to pay-per-view figures to settle the controversy.

Nonetheless, the UWFI pay-per-view received favorable reviews and did not bomb, as many predicted. The *Pro Wrestling Torch* reader's META Poll gave the show an average score of 6.3 on a 1-10 scale. The show was headlined by Nobuhiko Takada vs. Billy Scott. No return date has been announced by the UWFI.

The UWFI explored territory that eventually, All Japan, New Japan, and All Japan Women, Japan's top three promotions, will likely move into. There is already talk of AJW promoting an event on pay-per-view in November 1994.

As the number of cable television stations expands, having a TV timeslot will mean less and less, but the chances of a station picking up one of Japan wrestling's top television programs will become more likely. Once it airs in the U.S., if it takes off, bigger and more heavily watched stations may take a look at acquiring it.

As for now, that international invasion is not

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Mexican-style wrestling crosses border

AAA-IWC combines for 17,000 sellout in L.A., launching a new phenomenon in the States

By Dave Meltzer, Staff Writer

For the first time, the Mexican-style wrestling has crossed the border into the U.S. In a pay-per-view event, the AAA-IWC combined forces to present a new phenomenon in the States. The event was a success, drawing a sellout of 17,000 fans at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles. The event was a success, drawing a sellout of 17,000 fans at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles. The event was a success, drawing a sellout of 17,000 fans at the Sports Arena in Los Angeles.

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Photo by Dave Meltzer

Mexico, although AAA hero Konnan is an American-born U.S. citizen.

AAA's style, comparable to the EMLL and UWA groups in Mexico, features angles, storylines, heels ("rudos"), and babyfaces ("technicos"), just like American wrestling, although with hundreds of wrestlers active in AAA, it's hard to keep track of every wrestler, although the main storylines are well-maintained.

Its style is more open to creative improvising. Former lucha libre newsletter editor and currently active lucha wrestler, Kurt Brown, says lucha libre has potential in certain areas of the U.S. "They'll mainly rely on Hispanic areas. I don't believe they'll branch out nationally. But Ron Skoler and his associates just did a tremendous job promoting. If the promoting stays strong and the cards are up to standards, I could see the style being successful for a very long time."

"Wrestling Insiders" radio host attended the initial IWC/AAA show in Los Angeles. "It would make a great TV product if there was an American announcer," Tenay says. "The faster-paced style is more in tune with the MTV age."

IWA promoter Ron Skoler has set a goal of 48 events a year, four shows a month, expanding beyond Los Angeles into Chicago and New York. When talking about lucha libre's limitations nationally, Skoler cites ragga music as another so-called ethnic form of entertainment that went national when most predicted it would never appeal to more than a select group of fans.

Skoler wants to bring in American talent who can adapt to the lucha style in order to draw not only Hispanic-Americans, but everybody, even traditional WWF fans and new fans.

In motion in 1994 were shows scheduled for Mar. 11-13 in San Antonio, Los Angeles, and Oakland. Headlining Los Angeles is Konnan vs. Jake Roberts in a cage.

While the "international invasion" dates back to May 16, 1992 in Los Angeles when Japan's FMW in coordination with the lucha-style WWA drew 4,500 at the Cal State Gym with Negro Casas facing Atsushi Onita in a tag match, 1993 will be remembered as the year the first major strides were taken in what is sure to be the beginning of a trend. The expansion of the '90s could make the '80s expansion look minor.

9

LUGER RECEIVES MEGA-PUSH

WWF realizes creating a new superstar is not easy

To those who said Hulk Hogan was just a muscle-bound, tall, blonde-haired goof in the right place at the right time with the right push behind him were partially right. His success came because he was at the right place at the right time. But as Lex Luger showed in 1993, not any goof can pick up where Hogan left off and fill his shoes.

When the WWF agreed to break off its relationship with Hulk Hogan on June 15, it immediately turned its attention toward building a new superstar. The chosen one? "The Narcissist" Lex Luger. All it took was bodyslamming Yokozuna on July 4 during an impressive and memorable scene aboard the U.S.S. Intrepid to turn Luger from an arrogant S.O.B. into a patriotic hero.

Such is pro wrestling.

What is tougher than turning a wrestler on television is turning fan apathy into a revenue-generating push. Turning Luger into a replacement for Hulk Hogan has not been easy. In fact, thus far, the WWF hasn't been able to convince fans to cheer him when in the vicinity of the true lead babyface Bret Hart. It's battles like this—to get fans to like Luger—that make wrestling such a fascinating sport to follow.

Early in 1994, Luger had not been given up on. He is a near-sure-bet to leave Wrestlemania X with the WWF Title. But the WWF sure wished Luger was more popular today than he is. And they sure did their best to make that popularity happen.

It began with a series of candid, one-on-one interviews by Vince McMahon with a very personable and patriotic Lex Luger. Luger talked about his past use of steroids—making sure he didn't begin his babyface push with the mistake that seriously damaged Hogan—and repeated how great he thought America was.

Then began his Clinton/Gore style bus tour a few weeks before SummerSlam where Luger was being thrust into the no. 1 babyface position, challenging Yokozuna for the WWF Title. Luger travelled the country in a richly painted "Lex Express" tour bus, stopping in major markets from Los Angeles to Minneapolis to Pittsburgh to New York.

When in Pittsburgh, *Torch* columnist Mark Madden interviewed Luger. "There will never be another Hulk Hogan," Luger told Madden. "He was a unique entity. I don't want to fill his shoes. I just want to do the best job I can being Lex Luger."

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Lex Luger defeats Yokozuna by countout

Yokozuna retains title, begins new feud with Undertaker next night at television tapings

By Mark Hall, Senior Staff Writer

Summit, N.J., Oct. 10 (AP)—Lex Luger, the WWF's newest babyface, was defeated by Yokozuna in a hard-fought match at the WWF's television tapings here last night.

The match was a hard-fought one, with Luger showing signs of fatigue in the third round. Yokozuna, the reigning WWF Heavyweight Champion, won the match by countout.

Luger, who has been the WWF's top babyface since he was defeated by Hulk Hogan in a controversial decision at the Royal Rumble in January, was defeated by Yokozuna in a hard-fought match.

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Luger, who has been the WWF's top babyface since he was defeated by Hulk Hogan in a controversial decision at the Royal Rumble in January, was defeated by Yokozuna in a hard-fought match.

the WWF front office had to figure ways to hide Luger's lack of popularity from, well, the people who were not cheering him.

Late in 1993 and early in 1994, any angle Luger was in was carefully considered and concocted as to make sure there was no opportunity for fans to boo Luger. Given that Luger and Hart squared off against each other at the Rumble and during the subsequent coin toss, it was a challenge to keep it from being obvious on television that Hart was by far more popular.

The WWF had not batted 1,000 on its pushes leading into the "Lex Express" tour, but the booking crew had never invested such a generous amount of time so creatively with everything coming without a hitch and still end up with much less than expected to show for it.

In a sense, it showed that WWF fans are not Pavlov's Dogs, as they so often are referred to. They do buy promotional hype—as do fans of every sport, every movie, and even every network news telecast—but they will not swallow whatever the WWF wants them to.

As Lex Luger entered 1994, he had enormous pressure to get better at being a nice guy. Luger, who had a supposedly well-deserved reputation as an arrogant, snotty, self-righteous real-life person behind the scenes, did a very good job battling that reputation. In fact, he has convinced many people that he has genuinely matured and is legitimately more humble. In past WCW runs as a top babyface, he was popular, but popular because he was cool in an arrogant, hyper sort of way. The WWF attempted to make Luger popular in a wholesome, charismatic kind of way.

Luger showed at SummerSlam against Yokozuna that he doesn't have the natural charisma of a Hulk Hogan or Ric Flair or Ultimate Warrior or even a Sid Vicious. He is rigid in the ring, and doesn't seem to connect well with fans during a match. There were obvious points in SummerSlam where he needed to connect with fans after an offensive move, but at those times the difference between Luger and Hogan became obvious.

The WWF has coped well with the disappointment. Whether they're gambling too long on Luger's push—all the way through Wrestlemania X and beyond—is not all that controversial given there are few obvious options out there. If Luger turns into a box office draw, the WWF and Luger will have taken strides worthy of bragging about.

12 — PRO WRESTLING 1993

11-50

THE REST OF TOP 50

A Brief Look at Other Top Stories

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 11 | Dino Bravo murdered in his own home | 31 | Larry Cameron dies in European ring |
| 12 | Bobby Heenan leaves WWF, heads to WCW | 32 | Shockmaster falls on face on live Clash |
| 13 | WCW barely addresses steroid issue | 33 | Linda McMahon named as WWF President |
| 14 | WCW mini-movies embarrass company | 34 | Lex Luger doesn't win belt at SummerSlam |
| 15 | Jerry Lawler indicted on rape, fired from WWF | 35 | Bret Hart steals show at King of Ring |
| 16 | WCW begins taping at MGM-Disney in Florida | 36 | Hulk Hogan's movie "Mr. Nanny" dies at theaters |
| 17 | Randy Savage rips Hulk Hogan on Radio WWF | 37 | Doink gimmick works, then his babyface turn flops |
| 18 | Jim Cornette joins WWF, which works with SMW | 38 | Former AWA promoter Wally Karbo dies |
| 19 | Jerry Jarrett joins WWF booking crew | 39 | Ric Flair wins eighth NWA World Title |
| 20 | Hulk Hogan captures WWF belt at Wrestlemania | 40 | Cactus Jack seriously injured by Vader |
| 21 | Vader takes command of WCW Heavyweight Title | 41 | Jim Crockett announces plans to start WWN |
| 22 | 1-2-3 Kid breaks WWF size barrier, succeeds | 42 | Paul E. Dangerously fired from WCW |
| 23 | Ric Flair captures 11th world title at Starrcade | 43 | Rick Rude wins first NWA World Title |
| 24 | Vince McMahon turns heel in Memphis angle | 44 | NWA completely secedes from WCW |
| 25 | Jim Ross joins WWF announcing crew | 45 | Steiner Brothers win first WWF Tag Titles |
| 26 | Gene Okerlund jumps to WCW | 46 | Riot takes place at SMW card in Wise, Va. |
| 27 | ECW takes strides forward in Philadelphia | 47 | Shawn Michaels takes time off from WWF |
| 28 | Boston Garden sells out in one hour for Series | 48 | Paul Roma flops as the fourth Horseman |
| 29 | Mr. Perfect flops as face, quits WWF | 49 | Ultimate Fight Championship airs on PPV |
| 30 | 900 line fraud and deception runs rampant | 50 | Bob Backlund returns to WWF with no impact |

Dino Bravo's shooting death ended the life and career of one of Canada's biggest stars. His final years in the spotlight in the WWF were not what his 25 year career should be remembered for. At one time he was the most popular wrestler in Eastern Canada, holding the Canadian Hvt. Title in 1978 and '79. He held the Canadian International Title in 1980, '83, and '85. He held the WWF Tag Team Titles in 1978 for nearly six months with Gino Brito. His Mar. 4 death at age 44 was, according to authorities, a "settling of accounts" since Bravo had recently been associated with a \$400,000 cigarette bust... Heenan's departure from the WWF was a sign of the WWF's belt tightening and perhaps more than even Randy Savage or Bret Hart, the biggest acquisition WCW could have made... WCW's hiring of questionably sized wrestlers without a stringent steroid testing procedure shows how little consideration management has for the serious issue—both legally and ethically... WCW's mini-movies were a failed experiment. Credit goes to WCW for dropping them... Even though he plea bargained down to a misdemeanor in 1994, Lawler's departure from the WWF in the middle of a hot feud with Bret Hart and how the allegations affected his reputation in the USWA were both major stories in 1993... WCW's Disney tapings were a jarring change. It's a money saver to tape that far ahead, but at what cost to the quality and the flow of the syndicated show?... Savage ripping on Hogan was the symbolic end to Hogan's relationship

with the WWF. The motivations behind Savage's tirade are known, why he was allowed to do so still is unknown... Cornette swore he'd never work for the WWF. No matter what his rationalizations, he broke his pledge. Nonetheless, his impact wasn't as big as many expected, yet his role was limiting. The WWF's working relationship with SMW, albeit limited, didn't have a big effect on SMW until the early-'94 house in Knoxville... Jarrett jumping to the WWF left Lawler in control of the USWA and helped relieve Pat Patterson of some of his workload... Hogan's unexpected impromptu title match at Wrestlemania was one of the bigger surprises of the year... Vader established himself as a legitimate leader of a U.S. promotion in '93, surprising many. What a year he had... After the '80s push of steroid freaks, it's encouraging the WWF fans accepted Kid... The emotion in Flair's Starrcade match was truly remarkable... Vince McMahon living out his dream of being a heel "wrestler" in the USWA without stepping into the ring was fun to watch... Jim Ross jumping to the WWF and having a prominent role calling Wrestlemania was a big story. His dissension in the ranks from there was as big of a story... Okerlund was supposed to add a touch of class to WCW, but instead he added a touch of sleaze. At least he's a good interviewer, but his schtick could wear thin fast... Tod Gordon along with Paul Heyman took chances and began building a solid part-time regional promotion. Heyman's departure will hurt ECW's chances to

grow to full-time... The sudden sellout of Boston Garden showed the WWF still has power in the East... Mr. Perfect was going to fill Ultimate Warrior's top position. Instead, he followed him right out of the WWF after he couldn't cut it as a babyface... 900 line sleaze grew to new proportions late in '93... Cameron's death and the handling of it afterward were a sad period for wrestling and Otto Wanz... Shockmaster's fall was the blooper of the year... Linda McMahon's move appears more than ever to be a public relations move... Perhaps in retrospect, given Luger's lack of popularity, the WWF should have given Luger the belt to help his credibility last summer... Bret Hart had great matches at King of the Ring... Hogan will need to look to TV for fame... The departure of Matt Osborne killed the effectiveness of Doink... Karbo will be remembered as one of the truly good people in this industry... The big gold belt meant less this time, didn't it Naitch?... Cactus has a room with his name on the door at the hospital... Can Crockett succeed in today's wrestling marketplace?... Dangerously's firing after allegations of falsifying expense receipts did nothing to help his reputation... NWA secedes? What NWA?... Steiners's impact in WWF was minimal... SMW card gets out of hand... Michaels shows stress of road can be too much sometimes... Roma as a Horseman? Fans didn't buy it... Ultimate Fight Championship shows how real actual fights can look... Backlund flopped, but he got no push, either...

1993 PRO WRESTLING TORCH AWARDS

1. MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

Vader

1. Vader (30%)

2. Ric Flair (26%)

3. Bret Hart (18%)

4. Sting (7%)

5. Yokozuna (5%)

6-10) Jerry Lawler, Undertaker,
Shawn Michaels, Lex Luger, Terry
Funk

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Ric Flair, Rick Rude, Bret Hart

1991: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Cactus Jack

1990: Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Sting

1989: Ric Flair, Terry Funk, Lex Luger

1988: Ric Flair, Ted DiBiase, Randy
Savage

COLUMNIST PICKS AND COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: Vader, Bret Hart, and Ric Flair. Not only did Vader save a year's worth of WCW pay-per-views with great matches against Sting, British Bulldog, Cactus Jack, and Ric Flair, he staked his claim as one of the best big men ever by crossing over to headline a very successful UWFI series with Nobuhiko Takada in Japan. He may be the only wrestler who could successfully main event for any men's promotion in the world.

Hart was the real backbone of the WWF this year, surpassing Lex Luger and Hulk Hogan, both in the ring and at the gate. His work at the "King of the Ring" pay-per-view was the year's best one-night performance at the year's best WWF show.

While Ric Flair can no longer have a good match with a broomstick, or worse, Rick Rude, he was the only wrestler for WCW to draw ratings on his own. Starrcade proved that when given a suitable opponent and left to his own devices, Flair can create a package that still presents him as the most compelling in-ring figure in the country.

Mark Madden: Vader, Ric Flair, and Shawn Michaels. Considering Flair's misuse upon his WCW return, the only thing interesting in that company—indeed, in any U.S. wrestling product—throughout ALL of 1993 was Vader. He was the first heel in WCW to draw a legitimate heel response from ring intro through final bell since 1989, and he is what he is so often said to be: the best big man in the history of wrestling. He combines brutality, spectacular moves, psychology, and charisma in a package that, frankly, even Bruiser Brody would be envious of. Plus, he's from the old school in that he cares about the quality of what he does. From that standpoint—as well as the standpoint of being an outstanding performer—Vader stood virtually alone in 1993.

The only difference between Flair and Vader in terms of value was Flair's idle time, both before he arrived at WCW and once he got there. He revitalized that promotion even though that was certainly not the booker's intent, and he provided the ideal opponent for Vader, although that was certainly not the booker's intent.

Michaels was consistently the best performer

the WWF had, although he's a distant third here.

Carlie Gill: Vader, Ric Flair, and Bret Hart. Vader wins this easily. He never had a subpar match on a major show and really became the super over champion WCW needed. If WCW decides to take Vader out of the World Title picture because he is difficult to deal with, they are hurting themselves.

Chris Zavisa: Vader, Ric Flair, and Shawn Michaels. The three best bouts WCW had all year involved Vader against Sting, Cactus Jack, and Ric Flair. Vader dominated his promotion like no other American wrestler.

Ric Flair started the year in strong fashion against Curt Hennig and Bret Hart, and ended the year even stronger against Vader, but for at least five months, he was invisible and no factor at all.

Shawn Michaels is the WWF's most talented wrestler and one of the few reasons to watch their product. When he left in September, I stopped watching until his return.

READER COMMENTS

Chuck Richmond: Bret Hart, Vader, and Shawn Michaels. Hart solely carried the WWF this year even after he got shafted with the last minute title loss due to Hulk Hogan's demand. He stole King of the Ring and SummerSlam and was involved in the WWF's hottest feuds with Yokozuna and Lawler. He was a breath of fresh air as World Champion, he wasn't a goon pushed down our throats (i.e. Hogan and Lex Luger). He was the first non-cartoon character champion in a decade (Flair's push was as a hormonally crazed playboy, so his doesn't count).

Robert Lee Solari: "To be the man, you have to beat the man!" Sorry, Rick but Dusty booked your matches this year. This is still the Slick Ric award, although this year it goes to Mr. White. Vader has forever changed the perceptions of what a big man can do in a wrestling ring. Not just 747's and clotheslines, but top-rope superplexes and moonsaults (ouch!), too. His involvement in the year's top matches bears this out.

James Zordani: Bret Hart, Vader, and Ric Flair. Hart is a great worker and paid his dues for many years before gaining world title status. The WWF pushes so many bozos (Undertaker, Yokozuna, Razor Ramon) the promotion would really suffer if they didn't have Bret.

Steve Yohe: Vader, Bret Hart, and Yokozuna. Vader as a monster heel had a year worthy of Godzilla. He proved himself to be the best wrestler in the world working in a promotion that can't find its way into the bathroom. He may be dangerous to work with, but he has good matches with everyone and his opposition always comes

out looking good, even when pinned. He understands his gimmick, also. Look at the adjustments he made vs. Takada and how well it worked in front of 46,000 fans in Japan. Bret Hart was a one-man show in the WWF. Yokozuna's performance has been a surprise and without it, the WWF wouldn't have had a show to watch.

Jeffrey Cohen: Vader, Bret Hart, and Lex Luger. You can't blame Vader for the state of WCW. As far as being a credible champion, he got wins over every credible star except Dustin Rhodes (hmmm...). Bret Hart did what he was told and should be getting the strap back by next fall.

Jeff Gagliardo: Ric Flair is the only reason WCW's ratings are staying over 2.0. His matches with Sting and Sid Vicious drew some of the best numbers in years. It simply defies logic how long he's been on top, and he could stay there for another three years. Flair is living proof that if it's real, it will last. Vader gets second. He's the only wrestler since Flair who has saved many major shows from being bombs. He never disappoints. Third goes to Jerry Lawler because his feud with Hart in the WWF was the only one that drew.

Ernie Pisani: Vader, Ric Flair, and Bret Hart. Don't know where WCW would be without Vader. Many of its major shows are unwatchable except for the main event, which he usually carried. Vader vs. Cactus carried Halloween Havoc, Vader vs. Flair carried Starrcade.

Tim Davis: I'm not even sure if he's nominated, but Terry Funk is the only wrestler who can save U.S. wrestling. He's the most wanted wrestler and the only one who's capable of running a successful company. The only truly over WWF wrestler was Jerry Lawler. Ric Flair had no effect on WCW, which leaves Sting in third.

Tim Whitehead: Ric Flair, Vader, and Jerry Lawler. I would've voted Vader number one prior to Starrcade, but the reaction to Flair put him over the top. I don't think any one wrestler in the post-Hogan WWF is irreplaceable. Some are better workers than others, but no one stands out as being over more than the others, with the possible exception of Undertaker's popularity with the kids. SMW tried to get all of their key workers over so things are more equitable there, but try to imagine the USWA without Jerry Lawler.

Bill Strong: Vader, Ric Flair, Bret Hart. Vader is my pick for MVP because he has brought back the element of fear that is so important in getting a big man over. In a year in which both major

U.S. promotions went with superheavyweights as their champions, only one had the genuine aura of being dangerous. Yokozuna needs Cornette and (gasp) Fuji to speak for him to build heat. Vader makes his own heat by being the invincible monster.

Cathi Nelson: Ric Flair, Sting, and Vader. Those three together basically were WCW in 1993.

Phil Raetzman: WCW is concentrating on TV ratings for now and the ratings always went up when Flair was in the spotlight. I just don't think any one specific wrestler is responsible for the WWF's ratings. Vader gets second because he brought some credibility to a very low-regarded belt. Yokozuna gets third for the same reasons as Vader, but to a lesser degree.

Adam Kaine: One of the few bright spots for WCW in 1993 was the emergence of Vader. He is one of a few performers who comes through big on major shows. He is a credit to this sport with his tremendous work ethic. He is arguably one of the 15 best wrestlers in the world. We are all waiting for the day when McMahon convinces him to jump ship.

James Stanios: Vader kidnapped WCW and left no ransom. He taught Cactus Jack, Flair, Sting, and Smith the meaning of the word stiff.

Camp Childers: Although Ric Flair was totally misused almost the entire year, his work during December has given some of us a reason to watch WCW.

Ian Goodwin: I don't think there is another more credible monster type champion anywhere in wrestling. Vader is the most believable worker in the business, delivers great match after great match on the big shows, and puts people over when asked to.

Chris Clark: Even without two thirds of his name, Vader was still "the man" in 1993. Vader rekindles that old-time fear and awe wrestlers once held, and was a constant threat in the ring and around the announcer's table. Mr. Credibility Bret Hart runs a close second leading Vince's cartoon world with an aura of realism. Lawler is third. Where would the USWA be without Lawler?

Editor's Picks: Bret Hart was the number one reason to watch the WWF's showcase events in 1993. If 1993 isn't his career-best year, I can't wait to see how he tops it. Vader gets second for being the first obvious number one heel for WCW since Flair's glory days as a heel. Third goes to Ric Flair whose aura, effort, and results are still as valuable as anyone in this sport.

2. MATCH OF THE YEAR

Vader vs. Ric Flair

1. Vader vs. Ric Flair: 12/27 (28%)

2. Vader vs. Cactus Jack: 10/24 (24%)

3. Vader vs. Sting: 2/21 (20%)

4. Bret Hart vs. Mr. Perfect: 6/13 (9%)

5. Marty Jannetty vs. Shawn Michaels: 7/19 (8%)

**6-10 Sabu vs. Lightning (1-2-3)
Kid: Apr. 17, Hart vs. Doink/Hart vs. Lawler: Aug. 30, Flair vs. Hennig: 1/18, Rock & Roll & Anderson vs. Bodies & Eaton vs. Stud Stable: 4/2, Omdorff vs. Jack: 2/21**

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Pillman vs. Liger, Royal Rumble, WarGames, Vader vs. Sting

1991: Sting & Lex Luger vs. Rick & Scott Steiner, Bret Hart vs. "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig, Rick Steamboat & Dustin Rhodes vs. Larry Zbyszko & Arn Anderson

1990: Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane vs. Tracy Smothers & Steve Armstrong, Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior, Nasty Boys vs. Rick & Scott Steiner

1989: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat (2/20), Flair vs. Steamboat (4/2), Flair vs. Steamboat (5/7)

1988: Ric Flair vs. Sting, Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers vs. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane, Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Carlie Gill: Vader vs. Flair at Starrcade, Vader vs. Jack at Havoc, and Vader vs. Sting at SuperBrawl. Vader vs. Flair was great for so many reasons, probably most of all because of the emotion in the arena that night. Both worked hard to produce a credible match and with the size difference, it's a credit to them they were able to do just that. Vader's bout against Cactus was great also, but I think a bit too brutal. The SuperBrawl match with Vader was Sting's highlight of the year.

Bruce Mitchell: Ric Flair vs. Vader. An emotional coda to the career of this era's greatest wrestler. Second goes to Shawn Michaels vs. Marty Jannetty (first one on Raw). Fast-paced, precisely worked action from these two old partners. The surprise reappearance of Jannetty, the live atmosphere, and sensible booking augmented a great match. Third goes to Rock & Roll Express & Arn Anderson vs. The Heavenly Bodies & Bobby Eaton vs. The Stud Stable. Everything SMW stands for in the ring taken to the nth degree. A great fight.

Mark Madden: Vader vs. Flair, Michaels vs. Jannetty, and Vader vs. Cactus. The art of "marking out," i.e. suspending one's educated disbelief in order to lose one's self emotionally in a pro wrestling match was revived in this old soul for the first time since Royal Rumble '92 when Ric Flair beat Vader for his 11th world title at Starrcade '93. I yelled, I cheered, I clapped, I whooped, I exulted, I cried. This match featured two classic professionals who give their all every night and then some to create one of wrestling's most captivating moments ever. The pacing was perfect, the psychology was perfect, the action was brutal and stiff... Who's the man? At Starrcade '93, it was a tie. Michaels vs. Jannetty on Raw was unmatched for spectacular yet physical highspots, and Vader against Cactus Jack was the most brutality I've seen since the last time I watched a figure-skating practice.

Chris Zavisa: Heavenly Bodies & Bobby Eaton vs. Stud Stable vs. Rock & Roll Express & Arn Anderson, Sting vs. Vader in a strap match, and Vader vs. Cactus Jack. The best American bout I saw was the highly enjoyable three-way street fight from SMW. That match proved why SMW's big events are as good as it got in 1993 in the United States. My second pick goes to the best strap match of all-time, Vader vs. Sting.

This made us question what the hell Wahoo McDaniel was doing all of those years. Sting and Vader used the gimmick to perfection. Third goes to Vader's brutal beating of Cactus Jack on Apr. 5. Cactus suffered enough injuries to warrant hospitalization and this self-sacrifice helped make Vader the monster that he is today in the minds of the fans.

READER COMMENTS

Chuck Richmond: Too Cold Scorpio vs. Chris Benoit at SuperBrawl. The crowd actually broke character and cheered each man's stunning counter moves all the way until the surprising 19:59 win by Scorpio. This bout showed that the fans could support the New Japan style. It's a bout where you wished there were another 40 minutes left.

David Frey: The historical nature of Flair vs. Vader far exceeded the workrate, which was excellent as well. The build-up and aftermath was also excellent. Again, thanks Sid! The 1-2-3 Kid victory on Raw set the tone for that program. I didn't see that one coming.

Tim Davis: Michaels vs. Jannetty on Raw gets first for being the best wrestling match, Flair vs. Vader is next for its emotion and historical importance, and Vader vs. Jack from WCW Saturday Night is third for pure brutality.

Phil Raetzman: Hart vs. Hennig at "King of the Ring" by a hair. I thought this was more technically sound than Flair vs. Vader. There were several spots in that match you would never see in a Flair match, or a Hart or Hennig for that matter. Very unpredictable. Isn't it sad where Hennig went from here? Vader vs. Flair was almost a letdown given the buildup, but it shouldn't take away from it being an excellent match.

Ian Goodwin: Cactus vs. Vader would probably be first if not for the lousy finish. Flair vs. Perfect deserves mention for being very dramatic. First goes to Flair vs. Vader.

Editor's Picks: Jannetty vs. Michaels on Raw in May is number one for pure quality action along with a rich history between the competitors. It will stand the test of time. Vader vs. Flair gets second. Third goes to Kid vs. Sabu from Minneapolis in April.

3. BEST HEEL OF THE YEAR

Vader

1. Vader (42%)
 2. Jerry Lawler (21%)
 3. Shawn Michaels (18%)
 4. Yokozuna (6%)
 5. Rick Rude (4%)
- 6-10) Brian Christopher, Dirty White Boy, Brian Lee, Steve Austin, Borga

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Rick Rude, Ric Flair, Van Vader

1991: Jake Roberts, The Undertaker, Ric Flair.

1990: Ric Flair, Stan Hansen, Curt Hennig.

1989: Terry Funk, Lex Luger, Randy Savage.

1988: Ted DiBiase, Barry Windham, Eddie Gilbert.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Mark Madden: Vader, Jerry Lawler, and Shawn Michaels. With the mic, Jerry Lawler was the best heel. His attitude, arrogance, and delivery made him the WWF's most hated persona. But Vader gets the nod for best heel simply because he scared the hell out of people. On the mic he was witty without being cool or silly, and in the ring he just stomped the bejesus out of people. In recent years, heels have ruined themselves by being clever or funny. But Vader was all bad all the time, and I have to say that Harley Race helped. Shawn Michaels was the biggest pretty-boy jerkoff, but he was too cool to really be considered in a class with Vader or Lawler.

Bruce Mitchell: Vader gets first. This monster put fear into the hearts of the fans with his physical presence alone. His stiff style brought a level of realism and intimidation to his matches that even Yokozuna could not hope to duplicate. Jerry Lawler's mouth finally found a national home in the WWF and his "your mother wears combat boots" feud with "The Hitman" drew real interest from the fans. He may have put in the

year's most entertaining performance at SummerSlam with that outstretched forefinger from the gurney. His subsequent felony indictments cost him dearly in money and exposure. Jake Roberts gets third. Sure, his work in the ring is awful, but his sneering, smirking disdain for everything Hispanic brought forth the purest heel reaction from the fans of any show this year in Los Angeles at La Revancha.

Chris Zavis: Vader, Jerry Lawler, and Terry Funk. No wrestler can talk live like Jerry Lawler, but many can do a lot more in the ring. Vader was an excellent heel giving the promotion a big target to focus on throughout the year. Time after time, his match was the best one on the card. He is a true professional dedicated to excellence. The one downside is the missing H.G. Giger inspired helmet. I love that thing and would love to see them bring it back for Vader's entrances. Lawler gets second for his brilliant mic work with the WWF, especially his wonderful monologue at SummerSlam. Third goes to Terry Funk for his independent work, especially in the ECW. His choking of Joey Styles was classic as were most of his lines in pushing the Sabu feud.

Carlie Gill: Vader, Jerry Lawler, Shawn Michaels. Vader, for obvious reasons, is first. He inspired fans to fear him, which is rare in this business. That said, I think there are plenty of people ready and willing to cheer him if he turns babyface. He's almost too good to boo. Lawler did a great job during the Bret Hart feud.

READER COMMENTS

Tim Whitehead: Dirty White Boy, Jerry Lawler, and Vader. No one can touch the heat DWB created when he burned the Rebel flag. Lawler was awesome during his WWF stint. I like the credible heat. And Vader certainly fit that bill. Brian Lee was really coming on strong as the year ended and he just misses the Top 3.

Cathi Nelson: Vader was the ultimate bad guy in looks and moves.

Phil Raetzman: As a heel, "The King" could get his own mother to boo him. Shawn Michaels was a cocky S.O.B., but he was too cool and talented to truly hate.

Chuck Richmond: Vader is a real-life

monster. He's injured everyone he's faced. His skills are unmatched be it moonsaults or believable punches to the face. He's able to carry Sting to four-star-plus matches.

Robert Lee Solari: Is there a doubt? In this year of heels like the Equalizer, The Kongs and Ludvig Borga, Vader is a throwback to the heels of yesteryear. Second place goes to the WWF's edition of "The King" Jerry Lawler. Third place goes to Yokozuna who is no Vader in the ring, but worked well enough and "Yosh"ed the camera enough to suffice.

James Zordani: Jerry Lawler's attack on Bret Hart at the King of the Ring was priceless. Lawler's wit on WWF broadcasts only added to his persona. Lawler's stay in the WWF was a breath of fresh air.

Jeffrey Cohen: Vader gets the nod over Yokozuna because Yokozuna is extremely limited as a worker and Vader performed on more major cards, demonstrating his versatility and interview strength, which Yokozuna lacks. Lawler is third due to his superb mic work in his second major national exposure—the first being against Andy Kaufman.

Ernie Pisani: Jerry Lawler was entertaining and is a favorite of mine, but you had to hate him when he abused Hart's parents and Howard Finkle at Raw. Too bad he couldn't make Survivor Series.

Tim Davis: The Survivor Series proved Jerry Lawler was the most over heel over the year. Vader's monster image has been portrayed and been over with fans perfectly. Shawn Michaels gets third because his schtick has been improving ever since his turn.

Ian Goodwin: Who would have thought that a middle-aged, flabby regional star would be the WWF's biggest draw? Lawler gets first.

Editor's Picks: Jerry Lawler gets first for being vulnerable in the ring, yet relentlessly agitating outside the ring—a perfect mix. Second place goes to Shawn Michaels for similar reasons. Dirty White Boy gets third. What happened to Rick Rude? Heel to watch in '94: Shane Douglas.

4. BEST BABYFACE OF THE YEAR

"Hitman" Bret Hart

1. Bret Hart (26%)

2. Sting (23%)

3. Ric Flair (19%)

4. Undertaker (11%)

5. Lex Luger (5%)

6-10) Tracy Smothers, 1-2-3 Kid, Razor Ramon, Too Cold Scorpio, Cactus Jack.

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Sting, Bret Hart, Randy Savage

1991: Hulk Hogan, Sting, Savage.

1990: Hulk Hogan, Sting, Lex Luger.

1989: Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Sting.

1988: Sting, Hulk Hogan, Savage.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Chris Zavisa: Cactus Jack, Bret Hart, and Ric Flair. Talk about your weak fields. There was really not one wrestler who fit the bill as a great babyface who the fans rallied behind throughout the year. My favorite to watch was Cactus Jack. The promotion missed a unique opportunity when they failed to capitalize on his injuries and return. Bret Hart was more than competent for Titan, but you also got the feeling that there was no spark or chemistry there for most of the year. Bret never evoked the strong fan feelings that a great face needs to evoke. Third goes to Ric Flair purely on the strength of his end of the year Starrcade hype against Vader. For most of the year he was misused by the front office.

Bruce Mitchell: Konnan El Barbarro. Hey, numbers don't lie. In the midst of a wrestling recession, Konnan drew big gates on the AAA tour in the U.S. He even fits the Hogan model of being a top star who puts on sub par performances in the ring and stays over with his fans. Bret Hart is second. Hart turned his real-life political circumstances into an underdog persona that made him more popular with WWF fans than the overpushed Lex Luger. His hard work, sincere interviews, and a little fraud exposure from the *Torch* actually led to his legitimate Superstar of the Year award from Titan Sports. Undertaker gets third. As screwy as

the idea of Death as a babyface seems—unless you really, really don't feel well—Calloway's "lights out" ring entrance is quite a spectacle and reminiscent of the glory days of Hulk Hogan.

Mark Madden: Ric Flair, Sting, The Undertaker. Flair was WCW's biggest babyface in 1992, and he wasn't even there. Then, just the anticipation of his arrival made him WCW's biggest babyface in '93, before he ever set foot in Asheville for his SuperBrawl return. Flair doesn't have to work at being a babyface, at being loved. He just is. Ric Flair's no. 1 rating in this category is wrestling fandom's tribute to him for being the best this business has ever seen. As for Sting, give him credit, too. He has to work at being a babyface, and he just about has it down pat. He's shy of being No. 1—and being as good as he can be—due to subpar mic work, but he has babyface charisma and he knows how to milk it, especially in the ring. As for my no. 3 pick, The Undertaker, I really don't understand his popularity. But he sure is popular, more popular than any babyface in the WWF by far. Death sells, and the WWF lemmings are sure buying.

Carlie Gill: Bret Hart, Sting, and Tracy Smothers. I never thought I'd see the day when Bret Hart became the most popular wrestler in the WWF. It's got to be his wrestling because I've never looked at Bret as someone with a ton of charisma. Sting had an off year, but if allowed back into the spotlight in 1994, will win this again.

READER COMMENTS

Tim Whitehead: Tracy Smothers, Ric Flair, and Sting. If Flair had been pushed all year like he was in December, he'd have won this in a landslide. Instead, steady popularity by Tracy Smothers all year puts him in the no. 1 slot. Sting still gets a good pop, so he's no. 3 in a difficult category in which to vote, since no U.S. wrestler draws at arenas regularly.

Cathi Nelson: Sting was still WCW's franchise wrestler and top babyface in 1993, whether they realize it or not.

Phil Raetzman: After a long 18 months, WCW had no choice but to promote Flair as a babyface. The biggest pops from WCW crowds were always for Flair. Sting is still solid, but if only he would improve his interviews. Bret Hart gets

third. Poor Bret had his spotlight stolen (mugged?) from him twice in about four months by two muscular no-talents, and crowds still go nuts for him. There's something in his low-key persona that excites people in a way Luger can only dream about. Hart has worked a long time for his chance on top, whereas Luger had everything handed to him. The fans perceive that and will always respect hard work more.

Steve Yohe: Sting had a great year even with no one watching WCW. All of his matches vs. Vader were classics.

Robert Lee Solari: Death is "over"! It has been for years. I'm still stunned at the ovations the one-dimensional character Undertaker gets. But I guess everyone loves watching Superman even if he's from the dark side.

Jeffrey Cohen: Bret Hart, Razor Ramon, and Sting. Hart drew more money than Sting as the top man in his promotion. Ramon even drew better than Sting.

Tim Davis: Lex Luger's all-American image is that of a pansy. Bret Hart's no-nonsense tough guy character was more over and he gets first. Would ECW be as cool as it is without Terry Funk, who is my second pick? Third place goes to 2 Cold Scorpio, who is really becoming the most over wrestler in WCW. This guy will be first in this category in a few years.

Ian Goodwin: Flair proved he is still a draw with the four big ratings he drew for TBS.

Camp Childers: With all of the p.r. in the world, Lex Luger still came across as someone who doesn't like people or wrestling all that much. He doesn't even qualify.

Chris Clark: Death as an American hero, it's the Undertaker all the way. When the lights go out, the cheers come up—and to think he once threatened to disembowel Hogan's bluing flesh.

Editor's Picks: Bret Hart didn't pander—not even once—yet was more popular than anyone in wrestling. I like that. Second place goes to Razor Ramon who adjusted his character perfectly to his babyface role and surprisingly became a major player. Third goes to Flair, if for nothing else, the crowd in Charlotte.

5. BEST FEUD OF THE YEAR

Bret Hart vs. Jerry Lawler

1. Hart vs. Lawler (18%)

2. Jack vs. Vader (14%)

3. Sting vs. Vader (12%)

4. Rock & Roll vs. The Bodies (11%)

5. Lee vs. Smothers vs. Dirty White Boy (7%)

6-10 Flair vs. Vader, Rhodes vs. Rude, Cornette vs. Bob Armstrong, Hollywood Blondes vs. Steamboat & Douglas, Gilbert vs. Funk

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Flair vs. Savage, Moondogs vs. Lawler & Jarrett, Vader vs. Sting

1991: Eddie Gilbert vs. Cactus Jack, Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan, Sting vs. Cactus Jack.

1990: Nasty Boys vs. The Steiners, Ric Flair vs. Sting, Jerry Lawler vs. Eddie Gilbert.

1989: Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk, Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat, Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage.

1988: Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase, The Fantastics vs. The Midnight Express, Jake Roberts vs. Rick Rude.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Chris Zavis: Heavenly Bodies vs. Rock & Roll Express, Lawler vs. Hart, Sabu vs. Terry Funk. Jim Cornette's Bodies doing battle with Rick Morton & Robert Gibson took us back to wrestling's middle ages, but it was a welcome trip that was pure enjoyment. It helped make SMW one of the nation's most watchable promotions. I have a funny feeling we will still be

watching a Cornette team battle Morton & Gibson well into the next century and really do not mind that one bit. The Lawler vs. Bret Hart feud had some great insults and wonderful build-up but it's difficult to rank it better than second best when the big blow-off was scrapped at Survivor Series. Lawler's Detroit auto accident routine was still one of the better moments of the year. I enjoyed the build-up to Sabu vs. Terry Funk from ECW so much that I nearly parted with \$200 and flew there to see it. I said nearly. These two are still feeling their way through their bouts and should have some real barn-burners in the coming year that are worthy of match of the year consideration in 1994.

Carlie Gill: Lawler vs. Hart, Vader vs. Jack, and Smothers vs. Dirty White Boy vs. Brian Lee. Lawler vs. Hart had the biggest impact at the gate. Vader vs. Jack was sheer brutality and without that amnesia idiocy, it would have won. SMW is strong in the feuds department, but I particularly enjoyed the build up and execution of the three-way feud with Smothers, DWB, and Lee, ending with Dirty turning babyface.

Mark Madden: Jerry Lawler vs. Bret Hart, Rock & Roll Express vs. Heavenly Bodies, and Sting vs. Vader. It's a shame the Hart-Lawler feud was cut short when Jerry allegedly did his Charlie Chaplin impersonation in Louisville, because it was one of the few feuds in wrestling where two parties could actually manage to create a sense of hatred between themselves. Their match at SummerSlam was bizarre, twisted, and perfect. Moving on, I find the Walk & Stroll Express mind-numbingly boring these days—except when they're matched with Jim Cornette, who seems to bring out what babyface charisma these two have left just through sheer repetition and force of habit. Morton & Gibson work well with Prichard & Del Rey, so the wrestling product is there, too. Sting and Vader's charisma didn't match up all that well, but that flaw was swept aside by the quality and brutality of the matches. Honorable mention goes to Mark Madden vs. Bill Watts. Short, decisive, and with a clean finish.

Bruce Mitchell: Jerry Lawler vs. Bret Hart was very entertaining, successful at the gate, and rumor has it, something of a shoot. Second goes to Bob Armstrong vs. Jim Cornette. A washed up

old man, a fat non-wrestler with two blown out knees, and two years plus of a well-thought, well-executed storyline led to SMW's biggest house to date in Knoxville, Tenn. Third? Jerry Lawler vs. Vince McMahon. Well, it didn't really draw, but Vince's long-delayed Walter Mitty fantasy was entertaining while it lasted. The interviews from both were great and the one altercation between the two inditees was well-played.

READER COMMENTS

Robert Lee Solari: You can take off one point for its conclusion, but Lawler vs. Hart was still the best. Nothing else got that much heat for such a long period of time.

Tim Davis: Ric Flair vs. Vader was the best promoted, most over, most historically significant feud between WCW's two best wrestlers. Truly brutal and truly classic. In second place, Michaels vs. Jannetty produced the best WWF matches of the year. Vader vs. Cactus gave us matches we could shove in the faces of those who say "Wrestling's sooo fake!"

Tim Whitehead: Jim Cornette vs. Bob Armstrong, Tracy Smothers vs. Dirty White Boy, and Brian Lee vs. Dirty White Boy. Nothing in the WWF stood out this year except for Hart vs. Lawler, which just misses the top three. Flair vs. Sting died too early in the year. Flair vs. Vader started too late. SMW runs away with this one.

Phil Raetzman: Hart vs. Lawler gets first. If only things had panned out completely. If Lawler returns, this could place first in 1994, too. Rock & Roll vs. Heavenly Bodies went across three promotions fueled by Cornette's mouth. Second goes to Ric Flair & Arn Anderson vs. The Heavenly Bodies. Steve Austin's impression and "Flair for the Old" comment had me in stitches.

Chuck Richmond: Vader vs. Sting was awesome, like the old NWA—a long, drawn out bloody feud where it seems real matters were at stake and somebody was going to get hurt.

Editor's Picks: Lawler vs. Hart, even without an ending, was so much better than any other feud. Jack vs. Vader gets second for brutality. Smothers vs. Dirty White Boy vs. Lee deserves third for its long-term pacing and match quality.

6. MVT OF THE YEAR

The Heavenly Bodies

1. Heavenly Bodies (29%)

2. Hollywood Blondes (24%)

3. The Steiner Brothers (22%)

4. The Quebecers (8%)

5. Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell (7%)

6-10) The Nasty Boys, Rock & Roll Express, Douglas & Steamboat, Money Inc., Head Shrinkers

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Steve Williams & Terry Gordy, Rick & Scott Steiner, Arn Anderson & Bobby Eaton

1991: Rick & Scott Steiner, Arn Anderson & Larry Zbyszko, The Rockers.

1990: Rick & Scott Steiner, Midnight Express, Butch Reed & Ron Simmons.

1989: Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard, The Rockers, Road Warriors.

1988: Midnight Express, Fantastics, Road Warriors

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: The Hollywood Blondes. These two were so good both in and out of the ring that the WCW "braintrust" busted them up in order to put over Col. Sanders. In the way of someone's son, perhaps? The best team in the world at one point, though. Second goes to The Heavenly Bodies. With Stan Lane or Jimmy Del Ray obviously this act was the cornerstone of Smoky Mountain Wrestling. A surprise third

were Marcus Bagwell & Too Cold Scorpio. These guys were underrated by their own promotion, but they got better all year and the fans who attended the shows sure appreciated them.

Carlie Gill: Hollywood Blondes, Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell, The Heavenly Bodies. Pillman and Austin are more valuable together than apart based on the misuse of Pillman and the uninspired performance of Austin since the split. One can only hope the same fate does not fall on Scorpio & Bagwell during 1994. The Bodies were good this year, but not exactly fresh at the end of the year

Chris Zavisa: Heavenly Bodies, Rock & Roll Express, and The Head Hunters. If you remove the Bodies from SMW, you kill the promotion. If that does not fit the definition of most valuable, I don't know what would. No other team produced what Prichard & Del Rey did on a consistent basis throughout the year. Morton & Gibson provided worthy foes for Cornette's men and showed that their ability to work a match is much more important than having a gimmick at least ten years out of date. The Head Hunters' appearances in ECW were some of the group's best moments. These two brothers are a real find and could be a huge attraction for WCW or the WWF if given a chance. Long before Leon White did the moonsault, these two monsters were doing them (and more) to wow the crowds around the world.

Mark Madden: Hollywood Blondes, Heavenly Bodies, Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell. Steve Austin & Brian Pillman were one of the best new tag teams in several years. Their moves meshed, their personalities meshed, they were better on interviews together than they ever were individually, their gimmick (despite being a bit stale) was well-executed, and they both worked hard. How to improve that? I know! Let's break them up. As for no. 3 choice Scorpio & Bagwell, they should have been given every opportunity to be the new Rock & Roll Express. They had the ability and the babyface appeal. Instead, they were mired in the middle of the card as the booker didn't want to detract from any other babyface who happened to be his son. Despite all this, Scorpio and Bagwell were as over as they could given the circumstances. The Bodies were consistently tremendous and were

used properly in Smoky Mountain. The moral to this story? Fire Dusty Rhodes, hire Jim Cornette.

READER COMMENTS

Jeffrey Cohen: The Heavenly Bodies were great in all three promotions—SMW, WCW, and WWF. Dusty has the knack for destroying teams just as they peak—Hollywood Blondes, Dustin Rhodes & Barry Windham, etc.. The Steiners were the most consistent tag team in the WWF, which today is a sad statement.

Tim Davis: The Heavenly Bodies are no. 1 with a bullet. A team that features the talents of Stan Lane, Bobby Eaton, Tim Prichard, Jimmy Del Rey, and Jim Cornette must be no. 1. While they lasted, the Hollywood Blondes were the only true bright spot of WCW's spring and summer. The Steiners still can't talk, but they still have talent.

Tim Whitehead: The Heavenly Bodies, The Hollywood Blondes, and The Steiners. The Bodies have been awesome and will go down in history among the greatest all-time tag teams. You can tell the Blondes were good because otherwise WCW wouldn't have broken them up. The Steiners have been solid in the WWF and put on a good show during their week in SMW.

Bill Strong: Bodies, Blondes, Quebecers. The Bodies get my vote for MVT because they, along with the master, Jim Cornette, were a lot of fun to watch during the past year. Whenever they "invaded" a different promotion, it was thrilling and worth remembering. I also really became a fan of the Blondes and will never understand why the brains behind WCW broke them up, although it's nice to see Austin quickly got the U.S. Title because he is one of the stars leading wrestling into the next century.

Phil Raetzman: The Hollywood Blondes are two headliners of the future, but WCW broke them up way, way, way, way, way too soon. Bagwell & Scorpio could be the Rock & Roll Express of the '90s. The Steiners get third. Geez, they could at least give them an angle or interview once in a while.

Editor's Picks: The Heavenly Bodies were the most consistently good. Rock & Roll get second for being their opponents. The Blondes get third. They were broken up too soon.

7. BEST BRAWLER OF THE YEAR

Cactus Jack

1. Cactus Jack (26%)

2. Vader (22%)

3. Terry Funk (19%)

4. Sabu (13%)

5. Jerry Lawler (6%)

6-10) Moondogs, Kevin Sullivan, Eddie Gilbert, The Bruise Brothers, The Heavenly Bodies

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Cactus Jack, Eddie Gilbert, The Moondogs

1991: Cactus Jack, Gilbert, Stan Hansen (first year as category).

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: The Heavenly Bodies, Cactus Jack, and Terry Funk. The Bodies continued to tear the mountains down on a regular basis. Cactus Jack was great, but the question is, at what price? Terry Funk was solid at third. The old man stayed injury-free and had some nice brawls in ECW that were marred by some incomprehensible booking.

Carlie Gill: Cactus Jack, Vader, and Terry Funk. Jack and Vader are virtually tied. Their matches against each other bordered on being psychotic. Any 50 year old who can do the things that Terry Funk does deserves a special award just for himself. The only problem I see with the "Brawler of the Year" category is that the winners are winning for being almost too brutal on each other and their opponents. It doesn't seem right—or at least not commendable.

Chris Zavisa: Cactus Jack, Head Hunters, and Terry Funk. Cactus continues to show little regard for his personal longevity and the fans are the big winners. If WCW management weresmart, and that's a big "if," they would unleash Cactus in arena brawls the way Bill Watts used to feature Jim Duggan before McMahon turned him into a useless goof. The

Head Hunters do arena brawls as well as anybody since Bruiser Brody and Cactus. I watched in complete awe at ECW arena in September as they and Miguel Perez & Crash the Terminator literally tore holes in the walls. It was the best thing on the card and one of the most memorable things I saw in wrestling all year. Terry Funk had some great brawls on the indie scene and can still mix it up with the best and worst of them.

Mark Madden: Vader, Cactus Jack, Jerry Lawler. When Vader throws those looping forearms and fists, it makes ME want to reach for the Ben-Gay. And, despite his convincing work, those in the know say he works pretty light, all things considered. Vader is the most convincing at making a wrestling match look like an out-and-out fight now. I think he's a better brawler than Brody; he doesn't need chains and chairs, just fists, feet, and forearms. Cactus Jack is just half-crazed. If Vader is the best brawler, Cactus is the king of getting killed. Lawler, meanwhile, has mastered the brawl-based Memphis style better than anyone else.

READER COMMENTS

Chuck Richmond: I would have voted for Vader, but his legitimate killing of opponents is a mark against him, so it goes to Cactus. Hopefully he won't fall to the depths of Mr. Perfect, for fear of further injuring his back.

Robert Lee Solari: Even with the "injuring opponents" clause slipped into this category's qualifications, Vader is still head and bloody lineman gloves above the rest. Second and third places goes to the entire SMW crew. Their motto should be "beatings the way it used to be... and the way you like it."

Tim Davis: Something tells me that as long as he is breathing, Cactus Jack will always be the best brawler. Terry Funk proved he is the "King of Philadelphia" through his brutal tactics. I know I should, but I don't care how many people Vader has hurt, he's one of the best brawlers ever.

Tim Whitehead: It's extremely close between Cactus and Vader, but I give Cactus the edge for taking that powerbomb on the concrete. He should also be committed to an asylum for that maneuver, but that's another category. Dirty

White Boy, a very underrated brawler, earned the third spot.

Phil Raetzman: Cactus Jack gets first. Remember SuperBrawl vs. Orndorff? Or Havoc vs. Vader? Having the summer off hurt his momentum, but the quality overshadows quantity in this case. Paul Orndorff gets second for his work against Jack. Lawler gets third. What about Vader? Doesn't he deserve a vote for a position in the top three? Just ask any jobber, or Jack or Flair for that matter, because I don't think he deserves mine.

Danny Paris: Cactus Jack is simply the best since Bruiser Brody. To be mentioned with Brody is a big compliment.

Chris Clark: Brawling seemed to dry up in 1993 except for Tod Gordon's ECW. Once again, Terry Funk has to be considered the best, thanks to his consistency and tough as shoe leather image. Sabu claims second because of his relentless passion for electrifying matches, and third goes to the tables which put up a good fight, but ultimately lost to Sabu.

David Frey: Vader scares me just looking at him in the ring. Imagine how jobbers feel standing opposite of him.

Editor's Picks: Sabu gets first place for his fresh, believable, intense style of brawling. A lot of brawlers get recognized for doing a believable job of throwing a lot of punches outside of the ring. Sabu's repertoire of moves outside of the ring is more extensive than most U.S. wrestlers' repertoires inside the ring. Second place goes to Big Van Vader who began the year with a hot strap match against Sting, followed up with great matches on TBS and pay-per-view against Cactus Jack, and ended the year with a technically great match with strong brawling against Ric Flair. Vader loses consideration for first place because after all, it takes less skill to look credible while brawling if you're actually hurting your opponents while brawling, which he didn't do a lot, but enough to merit mention. The art of brawling includes not causing injury to your opponent. In third place, Cactus Jack edges Terry Funk, Jerry Lawler, and several SMW regulars for peaking at the highest level, although arguments can be made for the rest.

8. BEST AERIAL WRESTLER

2 Cold Scorpio

1. 2 Cold Scorpio (37%)

2. 1-2-3 Kid (31%)

3. Sabu (18%)

4. Brian Pillman (5%)

5. Chris Benoit (4%)

6-10) Jimmy Del Rey, Chris Candido, Shawn Michaels, Vader, Cactus Jack

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Jushin Thunder Liger, Brian Pillman, Lightning Kid

1991: Jushin Thunder Liger, Brian Pillman, Lightning Kid (first year as category).

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Chris Zavisa: Sabu and 1-2-3 Kid. Sabu does more death-defying moves than anybody in the business north of the Mexican border. He puts his health and physical well-being on the line every time he gets into the ring all in the name of giving the fans just what they want. What an unusual attitude for a modern day professional wrestler! Kid is my second pick based on his work for the first six months of the year against Sabu and his early WWF bouts. Late in the year, his take offs had been few and far between. I don't think anyone else is worthy of singling out for an award.

Mark Madden: 2 Cold Scorpio, 1-2-3 Kid, and Brian Pillman. Pillman would be first in this category if he had been allowed to show his full repertoire more often, because he's the most collisional and physical of my picks. All things considered, though, Scorpio gets my nod. He has a well-rounded array of moves to accompany his flying, thusly making his flying stand out even more and removing him from that dreaded category of being a gymnast. 1-2-3 Kid is right behind Scorpio for the same reason.

Carlie Gill: 2 Cold Scorpio, Sabu, and 1-2-3

Kid. One of my hopes for 1994 is for WCW to give Scorpio the freedom to do whatever he wants during a match. Some suitable opponents wouldn't hurt either. My wish for Sabu is a contract with a major American promotion or a contract with New Japan. This guy is too good to sit on the fringes of the business. Kid was great when he was allowed to be. More matches with Shawn Michaels and fewer with Bastion Booger would help.

Bruce Mitchell: First goes to 1-2-3 Kid, whose dramatic highspots, including the one he totally blew on live TV, personified the excitement of wrestling's highest-rated show—Monday Night Raw. 2 Cold Scorpio's 450 degree splash is U.S. wrestling's most exciting maneuver and he continues to add to his repertoire. Third goes to Sabu. While his matches do not fit together in any coherent fashion and he busts those tables for no discernible reason, there is obviously a lot of athletic talent there.

READER COMMENTS

Phil Raetzman: Scorpio, Benoit, and Kid. Benoit was top-notch during his short exposure in the States. Kid was kept grounded until the last months of the year. Why hire the guy if they won't let him show his talent?

Cathi Nelson: Sabu, Kid, and Pillman. Pillman is being surpassed by people he is better than. He needs to get back to how he was in Canada.

Bill Strong: Kid, Scorpio, and Sabu. I can only vote Sabu third after Kid and Scorpio because I haven't seen more than two or three of his ECW matches and, from what I've seen, with more exposure he will be a sure bet for first place in 1994, barring injury. The Kid gets my top vote because of his consistency and for the way he was introduced to WWF fans. His pinfall victory over Razor Ramon after two weeks of getting squashed and changing his name was brilliant as it introduced an exciting new star and added to the important feeling that surrounds Monday Night Raw when it's live.

Tim Whitehead: Jushin Liger didn't wrestle in the States this year, which opens up this category for Sabu, Kid, and Scorpio, all three of whom deserve pushes. I'm glad to see all three are finally getting at least some attention.

Tim Davis: Scorpio takes the number one spot. Sorry, Sabu, but Kid's martial arts and Vader's moonsault beat out breaking tables every day of the week.

Tom Quinn: Is there anybody in wrestling more exciting than Too Cold Scorpio?

Robert Lee Solari: Scorpio, Sabu, and Kid are the top three. Plans should be made now to give Scorpio a singles belt. When Scorpio fine-tunes his psychology, he will really be something to see. Sabu never met a table he didn't like to destroy and he doesn't get hurt, either. Kid deserves kudos for getting over the talents of the "little man" in the "big time."

Jeffrey Cohen: Scorpio is going to be a major star very soon. Hopefully he will wrest the TV title from Steve Regal late this spring for his first real singles push. Pillman has the chance to do some great stuff when put in the position. Shawn Michaels is willing to do to his body what made Curt Hennig a fan favorite three years ago.

Jeff Gagliardo: I can't vote for Liger since he didn't wrestle in the U.S. this year. As a heel, Pillman was grounded, so first goes to Scorpio, who'd be the biggest star in the country right now if Bagwell weren't holding him back.

David Frey: 1-2-3 Kid was great doing those moves on Raw. It makes it easy to forget about the Ultimate Warrior. Applause to Vince McMahon for giving him the push.

Chris Clark: 1-2-3 Kid edges Sabu for this award only because Kid held his own in a national promotion. Kid showed a nation what they had been missing. Sabu is the next high-flyer ready to take the nation by storm with his ability, attitude, and dogged determination. Third place goes to Vader. I will never forget his first moonsault. Call him 2 Cold Vader.

Editor's Picks: Sabu is the runaway winner for his wide variety of daredevil, complicated aerial moves. All the more amazing is he can also mat wrestle and brawl. 2 Cold Scorpio had the single most impressive move—the 450 degree splash—and more grace than anyone. 1-2-3 Kid finishes a strong third. All three have closed the gap between the best, Jushin Liger, and the rest.

9. BEST MAJOR TELEVISION EVENT

SuperBrawl III

1. SuperBrawl (25%)

2. King of the Ring (19%)

3. SummerSlam (16%)

4. Royal Rumble (14%)

5. Starrcade (11%)

6-10) Wrestlemania IX, Halloween Havoc, Slamboree, Beach Blast, Survivor Series

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Royal Rumble, Wrestlemania VIII, SuperBrawl II

1991: WCW WrestleWar '91, WCW SuperBrawl I, WCW Japan Supershow.

1990: WCW Great American Bash, WWF Wrestlemania VI, Starrcade '90.

1989: NWA Great American Bash, NWA WrestleWar '89, NWA Chi-Town Rumble.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: King of the Ring. The Bret Hart show was high in quality from the three Hart matches to the Lawler angle at the end. Second goes to Starrcade. Just for the build-up and execution of the only thing anyone cared about. Third goes to SuperBrawl. Vader vs. Sting, Bodies vs. Rock & Roll, Chris Benoit vs. Scorpio, and the return of Ric Flair made for a solid show.

Chris Zavis: WCW SuperBrawl and WCW Halloween Havoc. This is the one category in the U.S. awards that deserves to be scrapped due to not having a single worthy contender. The best we came up with were slightly better than average WCW shows on two of WCW's pay-per-view events. I give first place to SuperBrawl with the tremendous strap match between Vader and Sting and a good Bodies vs. Rock & Roll match thrown in as well. Those were the days when even Chris Benoit was allowed to show some of his talent. Second place goes to Halloween Havoc on the strength of

Vader doing battle with Cactus Jack. For the life of me, I cannot think of any other events on TV which were even decent. This was a terrible year for pay-per-view events.

Mark Madden: Starrcade, SuperBrawl III, and SummerSlam. If you gave me a choice between watching Flair-Vader from Starrcade and watching the best ten matches from all of the other American pay-per-views and prime-time specials in 1993, I'd pick Flair vs. Vader. Ergo, Starrcade gets the nod here. SuperBrawl had three great matches—Sting vs. Vader, Bodies vs. Rock & Roll, and Scorpio vs. Benoit—but the three combined didn't have the heat of Flair vs. Vader.

Carlie Gill: SuperBrawl, King of the Ring, and Starrcade. Most major events this year weren't worth the money or time put into watching them. It was a disturbing trend I'd like to see come to an end. Although SuperBrawl, King, and Starrcade were good, they didn't come close to the great shows of a few years ago.

READER COMMENTS

Tim Davis: King of the Ring had the best workrate of the pay-per-views. SuperBrawl III edges out Havoc as WCW's best because of the clean finishes. Honorable mention goes to ECW's UltraClash. It was the best independent big show of the year.

Robert Lee Solari: Starrcade '93 was the perfect cap to Ric Flair's history of great matches and good wrestling from top to bottom. SuperBrawl III had three four-star matches in my opinion, which tells the story. SummerSlam gets third. I hated the wrestling, but loved the angle with Hart, Doink, and Lawler.

Chuck Richmond: SuperBrawl was stunning, the card was excellent from top to bottom, everyone worked hard, and Ric Flair returned home.

Jeffrey Cohen: There was a big gap between the top two cards—SuperBrawl III and King of the Ring—and the rest.

Jeff Gagliardo: SuperBrawl ranks among the best pay-per-views ever, largely because of the different styles of matches and their ability to top

one another. SMW's Bluegrass Brawl had non-stop heat and non-stop action, and gets second. Third goes to the January Clash, which showed that had Bill Watts been given more time, WCW would be in a lot better shape than it is today.

Phil Raetzman: King of the Ring gets first. Bret Hart puts on that performance and Lex Luger gets the big push. Who says life is fair? The June Clash gets second for Flair & Anderson vs. The Blondes, Windham vs. Scorpio, and the six-man. It had the highest number of quality bouts on any show this year, other than King of the Ring. If there ever was a one-man show, this was it. This year, the undercards were the worst they have ever been. Havoc might have placed if there had been some clean finishes.

Tim Whitehead: WCW's SuperBrawl was its best event of the year by a wide margin. King of the Ring was a respectable no. 2. Starrcade was pulled up to no. 3 thanks to Flair vs. Vader. Overall, though, this was a bad year for pay-per-views and Clashes.

Ian Goodwin: SuperBrawl III was nearly perfect with great action from top to bottom, including the return of Ric Flair and a tremendous main event. Halloween Havoc showcased several excellent matches, but the screwjob endings damaged it. King of the Ring was the WWF's best pay-per-view because it focused on wrestling, not gimmicks.

Chris Clark: Slamboree '93: The Legends Reunion was the best in my book. It came off with a bit of class, a lot of history, and a ton of respect for wrestling's golden past. Second goes to the WWF's King of the Ring because it held my interest from start to finish. Third goes to Wrestlemania only because it was truly great to see Hogan look like a bald, beaten-up, Kendall Windham-sized stick of flab.

Editor's Picks: There was no single event that stands out as being polished from start to finish with long-term impact. My top pick goes to King of the Ring for good or great performances from Bret Hart, Bam Bam Bigelow, Razor Ramon, Shawn Michaels, and Mr. Perfect. SuperBrawl III is a close second. Third goes to Starrcade for the main event.

10. MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Jim Cornette

1. Jim Cornette (41%)

2. Tammy Fytch (19%)

3. Paul E.

Dangerously (17%)

4. Johnny Polo (7%)

5. Harley Race (6%)

6-10) Paul Bearer, Missy Hyatt, Ron Wright, Mr. Fuji, Col. Rob Parker

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Paul E. Dangerously, Jim Cornette, Ron Wright

1991: Paul E. Dangerously, Sensational Sherri, Paul Bearer.

1990: Jim Cornette, Bobby Heenan, Sensational Sherri.

1989: Jim Cornette, Bobby Heenan, Paul E. Dangerously.

1988: Jim Cornette, Paul E. Dangerously, Bobby Heenan.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: Tammy Fytch. A '90s gimmick personifying the type of woman who makes male wrestling fans', including Jim Cornette's, testicles recede. Fytch plays the part with perfect pitch, or is that a perfect witch, or a perfect bi... oh, screw it. Second is Jim Cornette. He's still the best, but he pushes overexposure in SMW, and his impact in Connecticut was less than one would think going in. Of course, they did ask him to help get Lex over... Finally, Johnny Polo, an annoying and snotty addition to the Quebecers act, gets the third slot.

Chris Zavisa: Jim Cornette and Paul E. Dangerously. Cornette shined in his own SMW and made his show worth watching just to hear his tremendous interviews week after week. What Bruiser Brody was to brawling, Cornette is to managing. Dangerously was good in ECW, especially with Sabu toward the end of the year. I wish ECW would have totally scrapped that

Hunter Q. Robbins character and given Dangerously a bit more exposure. Giving Robbins air-time over Paul E. is like driving a '68 Dodge when you have a new Mercedes in the garage.

Mark Madden: Jim Cornette, Tammy Fytch, and Harley Race. Somebody should bronze Jim Cornette at this point. Some get awards like this year after year because of who they are; Cornette just keeps earning them. Tammy Fytch's charisma (i.e. bitchiness) overcame that she was green to make her a strong no. 2 and Harley Race's surprising mic work and nightly big bump while serving as Vader's mouthpiece makes him a strong no. 3. Missy Hyatt would have been my top pick had she been naked at Starrcade. Close don't count.

Carlie Gill: Jim Cornette, Tammy Fytch, and Ron Wright. Cornette has almost no competition left in a business filled with managers like Harley Race and Harvey Whippleman. I think the Tammy Fytch character is the best in years. Ron Wright is starting to get a little stale, but is still fun as the cranky old man with many ailments. Don't know what he'll do as a babyface, though.

READER COMMENTS

Tim Whitehead: Jim Cornette, Tammy Fytch, and Ron Wright. SMW cleaned house in this category. Most of the managers in other promotions are pathetic.

Phil Raetzman: Jim Cornette for his work in WCW, the WWF, and SMW. I don't even remember any other managers featured by the majors this year.

Ian Goodwin: It's too easy to vote for Cornette. If I judged fairly, Race is a more than adequate manager. He's different from the Hart-Dangerously-Cornette type because he is a former wrestler and thus seems more credible. At least when he hits someone it looks believable. Someone like Vader doesn't need someone like Cornette to steal the spotlight.

Robert Lee Solari: Notwithstanding his experience in Wise, Va. and flippant explanation of that event, Jim Cornette is the man. No one offers what he brings to the table. Too bad the

big two have really thinned out their good manager ranks. Second goes to an up-and-comer, Tammy Fytch. Her "Tammy's Tips" segments had me rolling. Third goes to Daryl Van Horne. Now, if only he had some real wrestlers to manage. But Daryl, with all of the references to porn stars, just how do you spend your free time?

Chuck Richmond: Jim Cornette gets first. Even though he sucked in the WWF, his SMW work is enough to capture the first spot.

Tim Davis: Jim Cornette sold as many WWF tickets as El Matador, but he's still the best. Johnny Polo is starting to show his potential. Paul Bearer gets third because of, well, who else is there? Maybe when WWN gets started, we'll see more of Paul E.

Tom Quinn: Jim Cornette was the first man with the leverage to get Vince McMahon to mention an independent promotion on the air. For that, he deserves something.

David Frey: Cornette's entry into the WWF and his emotional meeting with the Brain was enough to get my vote. Bad year for managers.

Chris Clark: With a total runaway of the category, Jim Cornette earns, I mean earns, top spot for 1993. Always one of the greatest on the mic, Cornette kept taking great bumps—all of this while running his own show. Johnny Polo gets second place for two reasons: (1) Because he actually held one name for longer than a month and (2) because he has yet to wear the same outfit twice. Third goes to Harley Race. He's been reduced to a grinning idiot, but he still takes great bumps.

Editor's Picks: Jim Cornette, Paul E. Dangerously, and Tammy Fytch. Had Dangerously done more, he would have won. His work in ECW the last quarter of the year deserves more praise than it has received. Cornette, though, is first for another great year. His style was cramped in the WWF and his SMW promos seemed almost canned at times, but from January to December, he was the better than anyone else. Tammy Fytch may be the best "role player" manager to come along in years and has a natural on-camera presence.

11. BEST BROADCASTER

Bobby Heenan

1. Bobby Heenan (36%)

2. Jim Ross (19%)

3. Vince McMahon (17%)

4. Tony Schiavone (16%)

5. Jesse Ventura (9%)

6-10) Bob Caudle, Jerry Lawler, Dutch Mantell, Jim Cornette, Larry Zbyszko

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Jim Ross, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

(Before 1992, announcers and color commentators were separate categories.)

Announcer of the Year:

1991: Ross, Schiavone, McMahon.

1990: Ross, Schiavone, McMahon.

1989: Ross, Schiavone, Lance Russell.

1988: Ross, Ventura, Russell.

Color Commentator of the Year:

1991: Heenan, Paul E. Dangerously, Scotty "The Body" Anthony.

1990: Ventura, Paul E. Dangerously, Roddy Piper.

1989: Ventura, Jim Cornette, Michael Hayes.

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: Vince McMahon. He lost his focus a few times—like when he kept calling I.R.S. "Mr. Rotundo," so he obviously had other things on his mind at times, but he was on so much and he was so sincere that it was almost like he was practicing to testify or something. Bob Caudle gets second. He was well-prepared by Jim Cornette so that he smoothly got over most of the storyline points. Third spot goes to

Jim Ross. He was held back and looked progressively more tired as the year went on, but when given the chance he was still better at play-by-play than anyone else.

Chris Zavis: Bobby Heenan, Jim Ross, and Tony Schiavone. Here is yet another, "Gee, do I really have to pick a winner?" category. The best this country has is Jim Ross, but Vince signed him away from WCW and grossly misused his abilities relegating him to the second string. Wait a minute—that's the capsulated history of modern day WWF! The man on the mic I enjoyed most was Bobby Heenan and I place him first for spouting some of the wittiest comments in years. Tony Schiavone gets third for a competent if less than inspiring job week in and week out.

Mark Madden: Bobby Heenan, Vince McMahon, and Bob Caudle. This is the entertainment biz, right? Well, Bobby Heenan was the only announcer in wrestling who was entertaining every time I saw him. WCW's addition of Heenan should definitely stabilize Main Event ratings. He's a scream, but he doesn't detract from the product, and that's a hard line to walk. McMahon provides drama, humor, and gets his product over exactly how he wants it. He'd be the ideal choice to call the game on the prison radio station if they ever remake "The Longest Yard." Caudle is perfect for SMW and he supports Jesse Helms, as do I.

Charlie Gill: Bobby Heenan, Jim Ross, Terry Taylor. Heenan really took center stage this year with the debut of Monday Night Raw. I only hope he can take WCW's product to that same level. Jim Ross seemed frustrated in his role on the B-team. Considering he was far and away the best announcer of the past 10 years, I can understand. He still did a good enough job to earn a runner up position. Taylor is proving to be as good behind the mic as he is in the ring. I'd like to see him get more exposure.

READER COMMENTS

Robert Lee Solari: Bobby Heenan is first and will be missed by McMahon more than he realizes. Tony Schiavone has made light years of improvement. He's almost as good as Jim Ross used to be. Third place is a tie with Bob Caudle and Dutch Mantell. Bob was the perfect straight

man and Mantell was 1993's Jesse Ventura.

Tim Whitehead: Bob Caudle, Vince McMahon, and Dutch Mantell. Sometimes it seems as if Caudle is the only commentator in the business who knows when to shut up. Giving credit where it's due, Vince McMahon has been impressive on the mic this year. And Dutch Mantell is great on color.

Phil Raetzman: I think Vince McMahon is so good for the same reason I think Bill Watts's commentary in Mid-South was so good. Vince knows exactly what is being booked and in what way he wants the viewer to see a wrestler or an angle. Therefore, he can tailor his choice of words and tone of voice accordingly. Third goes to Tony Schiavone, who deserves credit for trying to fill the void for the currently invisible Jim Ross. He tried to make sense of the title mess in WCW—which is still a mess, but at least he tried.

Chuck Richmond: Bobby Heenan was on three of the WWF's programs, which shows his importance. His wit rules and his loss in the WWF is already hugely felt.

Jeff Gagliardo: Jim Ross is ineligible this year because he was announcing a cartoon, not wrestling. Heenan and Ventura were extremely funny, but neither care about what's going on in the ring. Schiavone was good this year and is my first pick. Larry Zbyszko is highly underrated and is the best color commentator in the world. Third goes to Bob Caudle, who has finally found a home in SMW.

Tim Davis: Bobby Heenan is the god of broadcasting. No one is funnier, no one is more believable, and no one is closer to being better. Heenan can't draw, but Jerry Lawler, who is second, can, so who cares? Third goes to Vince McMahon whose enthusiasm added to Raw's excitement.

Chris Clark: King of the well-timed one-liners, Bobby Heenan is still the most fun to watch as well as listen to.

Editor's Picks: Bobby Heenan, Vince McMahon, Jim Ross. McMahon and Heenan made each other better.

12. AAA ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

Sabu

1. Sabu (39%)
2. Chris Candido (24%)
3. Smoking Gunns (19%)
4. Bobby Blaze (9%)
5. Harlem Heat (5%)

6-10) Tammy Fytch, Quebecer Pierre, M.O.M., Tazmaniac, Daryl Van Horne.

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Brian Christopher, Too Cold Scorpio, Dallas Page

1991: Lightning Kid, Johnny B. Badd, Jerry Lynn.

1990: Steve Austin, El Gigante, J.W. Storm.

1989: Wayne Bloom, Dustin Rhodes, Larry Cameron.

1988: Scott Steiner, Ricky Rice, Derrick Dukes.

In 1993, there were dozens of "true rookies," testing the waters of this sport for the first time, but it may be another year or two (or even five) before they gain enough skills to work full-time in a major promotion. To steal baseball terminology, "A" and "AA" rookies, such as those who work a few dates regionally for small promotions with no national exposure or recognition, are not eligible for this award. Wrestlers such as Brian Christopher, Lightning Kid, Larry Cameron, Derrick Dukes, Sabu, and Chris Candido have all finished strong in this award in the past or this year, but all had years of experience under their belts. Each, however, placed in this category in the year they first wrestled on the "AAA" (full-time or national level).

COLUMNIST PICKS & COMMENTS

Bruce Mitchell: First is Bobby Blaze. He's my first place pick since he plays his part so well. Second goes to The Smoking Gunns who provided the WWF with consistently good ring

work. Those cap pistols are really silly, though. One suggestion: A couple of .357 Magnums would really liven up those house shows.

Chris Zavisa: Sabu and Chris Candido. Sabu has been around these parts for several years, but this was the year that the rest of the nation and world discovered his amazing high-flying abilities. If he gets the break he needs, he could be a major star and an important player in the rebuilding of the American wrestling business. He is a unique combination of ability, determination, and guts. Chris Candido has future star written all over him if the U.S. scene can ever get over its fascination with freakish size and instead focus on ability. Yeah, and if I hit the lottery...

Mark Madden: Chris Candido and Smoking Gunns. Candido is the best of those eligible. The Smoking Gunns provided mid-card tag team competence to a promotion that rarely has it.

Carlie Gill: Chris Candido, Tammy Fytch, Smoking Gunns. I have absolutely no idea why a bitchy female college student would appeal to me. Hmmm. I guess I'll have to give that some thought. Her character is great. The Smoking Gunns are the best new tag team to appear in the WWF in several years. I'd love to see their improvement after some time in Japan. Candido is one of the new wrestlers who has the ability to pull off his gimmick. It's amazing SMW has been able to hold on to him.

READER COMMENTS

Tim Whitehead: Sabu, Chris Candido, and Bobby Blaze. I think Blaze was the best actual rookie in 1993 but broadening this category opens up Sabu and Candido, who are getting their first real shots this year. What impresses me most about these three is their attitude and desire to constantly improve.

Cathi Nelson: Why aren't Sabu and Candido in a major federation?

Phil Raetzman: Imagine the reaction Sabu would get on a national scale? Personally, I think they should take advantage of the Sheik connection and make "Sheik" Ed Farhat his manager. Sheik could help kickstart some dates in the Midwest, especially Michigan. Candido is

second, followed by the Smoking Gunns. The Gunns need a manager to carry their interviews. The "good ol' boy" stuff is losing steam. A heel turn wouldn't be so bad, either. They could change to black outfits.

Robert Lee Solari: Sabu gets first, followed by SMW's "1-2-3 Kid," Billy Blaze. Third goes to Tammy Fytch.

Jeffrey Cohen: Sabu will destroy himself faster than Cactus Jack. That's a compliment.

Tim Davis: He's no Van Hammer, but Chris Candido has the most potential. If he stops that table-breaking crap, Sabu will live to be the Cactus Jack or Jushin Liger of the 1990s. Daryl Van Horne gets third place.

Betty Schaffer: Sabu's reputation precedes him. The match I saw him in was short, but I could see he is very talented. The Smoking Gunns have a great entrance and strong gimmick.

Adam Kaine: I have been a wrestling fan for ten years and no wrestler has had an impact on me like Sabu. Sabu has one goal in wrestling—to have the best match on any card he works. His aerial skills and suicidal bumps have to be seen to be believed. From doing a moonsault onto a table or tumbling backward down bleachers to the floor, Sabu is worth a three hour drive to see live. Even my non-wrestling fan friends were amazed.

Chris Clark: Sabu, Sabu, Sabu. Unfortunately, his running (or rather flying) away with it this year takes him out of the running for 1994 when he will really ignite the wrestling world. The Smoking Gunns shoot into second place because they look like ordinary average cowpokes, but move well and wrestle like a well-oiled revolver.

Editor's Picks: Sabu just edges Chris Candido for first place. Candido has been superb in virtually every area, including interviews, an area in which Sabu has not treaded. Candido has worked full-time and paid his dues on the road in SMW while rising from opening matches at the beginning of the year as an unproven part-timer from the East Coast to the top of the cards and a legitimate main eventer. Harlem Heat gets third place for being horrible at the beginning of the year and being respectable by the end.

SECONDARY CATEGORIES 13-43

13: Best Workrate

- 1) Bret Hart
- 2) Shawn Michaels
- 3) Vader
- 4) Ric Flair
- 5) Sabu

14: Independent MVP

- 1) Sabu
- 2) Terry Funk
- 3) Jerry Lawler
- 4) Hawk
- 5) Eddie Gilbert

15: Promotion of the Year

- 1) Smoky Mountain Wrestling
- 2) World Wrestling Federation
- 3) World Championship Wrestling
- 4) Eastern Championship Wrestling
- 5) AAA/IWC

16: Non-TV Promotion

- 1) NWA World Wrestling Alliance
- 2) Championship from Indiana
- 3) Big D Pro Wrestling
- 4) Pro Wrestling America
- 5) American Champ. Wrestling

17: Suit of the Year

- 1) Jim Cornette
- 2) Vince McMahon
- 3) Paul E. Dangerously
- 4) Jerry Jarrett
- 5) Eric Bischoff

18: Angle of the Year

- 1) Lawler-Hart at SummerSlam
- 2) Kid upsets Ramon on Raw
- 3) Flair retires if loses at Starrcade
- 4) Vader bombs Jack on floor
- 5) Flair for the Old

19: Rising Star

- 1) Too Cold Scorpio
- 2) Sabu
- 3) 1-2-3 Kid
- 4) Chris Candido
- 5) Marcus Bagwell

20: Tallspin of the Year

- 1) Rick Rude
- 2) Mr. Perfect
- 3) Sid Vicious
- 4) Bobby Eaton
- 5) Ron Simmons

21: Best Weekly Show

- 1) Monday Night Raw
- 2) Smoky Mountain Wrestling
- 3) NWA Eastern Championship
- 4) WCW Saturday Night
- 5) WWF Superstars

22: Most Embarrassing Wrestler

- 1) Shockmaster
- 2) Bastion Booger
- 3) Doink
- 4) Equalizer
- 5) Men on a Mission

23: Worst Wrestler

- 1) Equalizer
- 2) Shockmaster
- 3) Giant Gonzales
- 4) Sid Vicious
- 5) Awesome Kongs

24: Announcing Team

- 1) McMahon & Heenan
- 2) Schiavone & Ventura
- 3) Caudle & Mantell
- 4) Ross & Heenan
- 5) McMahon & Savage

25: Best on Interviews

- 1) Ric Flair
- 2) Jim Cornette
- 3) Jerry Lawler
- 4) Brian Christopher
- 5) Terry Funk

26: Underutilized

- 1) Chris Benoit
- 2) Terry Taylor
- 3) Bobby Eaton
- 4) Too Cold Scorpio
- 5) Brian Pillman

27: Most Overpushed

- 1) Sid Vicious
- 2) Lex Luger
- 3) Dustin Rhodes
- 4) Shockmaster
- 5) Irwin R. Schister

28: Most Insulting Stereotype

- 1) Yokozuna
- 2) Missy Hyatt
- 3) Harlem Heat

4) Men on a Mission

- 5) Ludvig Borga

29: Best Wrestling Maneuver

- 1) Vader's Moonsault
- 2) Scorpio's 450 Degree Splash
- 3) Scott Steiner's Frankensteiner
- 4) Sabu's Moonsault
- 5) Benoit's German Suplex

30: Worst Move

- 1) Shockmaster Bearhug
- 2) Crush's Headvice
- 3) Lex Luger Loaded Forearm
- 4) Booger Drop
- 5) Yokozuna's Bonzai Splash

31: Most Charismatic

- 1) Ric Flair
- 2) Sting
- 3) Undertaker
- 4) Shawn Michaels
- 5) Bret Hart

32: Worst Angle

- 1) Exploding Boat Mini-Movie
- 2) Shockmaster's Debut
- 3) Cactus Jack Loses Memory
- 4) Paul Roma Becomes Horseman
- 5) Hogan Beats Yokozuna in impromptu match at Wrestlemania

33: Worst Match

- 1) Doinks vs. Bigelow et al (11/24)
- 2) Shockmaster vs. Kong (12/27)
- 3) War Games (9/19)
- 4) Hogan vs. Yokozuna (4/4)
- 5) Gonzales vs. Undertaker (8/30)

34: Worst Personality

- 1) Sid Vicious
- 2) Lex Luger
- 3) Lord Steven Regal
- 4) Ludvig Borga
- 5) Vince McMahon

35: Worst Interviews

- 1) Scott Steiner
- 2) Ice Train
- 3) Crush
- 4) Shockmaster
- 5) Dustin Rhodes

36: Personal Favorite

- 1) Ric Flair

2) Shawn Michaels

- 3) Vader
- 4) Bret Hart
- 5) Cactus Jack
- 5) Sabu

37: Least Favorite

- 1) Sid Vicious
- 2) Dusty Rhodes
- 3) Equalizer
- 4) Lex Luger
- 5) Hulk Hogan

38: Japan Wrestler

- 1) Kenta Kobashi
- 2) Stan Hansen
- 3) Jushin Liger
- 4) Manami Toyota
- 5) Atsushi Onita

39: Japan Tag Team

- 1) Toyota & Yamada
- 2) Hell Raisers
- 3) Misawa & Kobashi
- 4) Head Hunters
- 5) Kroffat & Furnas

40: Japan Feud

- 1) Misawa et al vs. Kobashi et al
- 2) WAR vs. Skinheads
- 3) Hansen vs. Kobashi
- 4) Misawa vs. Hansen
- 5) Onita vs. Funk

41: Japan Match

- 1) Kansai & Ozaki vs. Toyota & Yamada (4/11)
- 2) Kobashi vs. Williams (8/31)
- 3) Hansen vs. Kobashi (7/29)
- 4) Onita vs. Funk (5/5)
- 5) Hokuta vs. Kandori (4/2)

42: Japan Promotion

- 1) All Japan Women
- 2) All Japan Pro Wrestling
- 3) New Japan Pro Wrestling
- 4) Frontier Martial Arts

43: Lucha Libre Wrestler of the Year

- 1) Konnan el Barbaro
- 2) Ray Misterio Jr.
- 3) Cien Caras
- 4) Heavy Metal
- 5) El Canek

PRO WRESTLING TORCH'S

10

1993'S

MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE

IN PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING

An impromptu panel of pro wrestling journalists and employees within the industry has compiled the second annual list of professional wrestling's most powerful people. The list is based on the power one had and was exercising as of Dec. 31, 1993. Both wrestlers and promoters are eligible for this list. Only the United States wrestling industry is considered. Each listing is accompanied by analysis of how they achieved their power and where they might land on this list next year.

1

VINCE MCMAHON
World Wrestling Federation

POSITION: C.E.O Titan Sports

AGE: 48

YEARS IN POSITION: 10

Even though Vince McMahon was again the unanimous choice for the number-one position on this list, he was standing on less stable ground at the end of 1993 compared to the end of 1992. Nineteen-ninety-three was probably the most stressful year in McMahon's life with the tension of pending indictments all year until he was actually indicted in November. At the end of 1993, McMahon was still, without a doubt, the most powerful figure in professional wrestling in the United States, although his vulnerability was at an all-time high as WCW, at least in spirit, began a run at trying to challenge the WWF for the top spot in the industry. McMahon showed vulnerability financially as he lost key players, most notably Bobby Heenan. As he entered 1994, McMahon had to prepare for a Wrestlemania without Hulk Hogan and a trial that could send him to prison and cost him his nearly \$10 million headquarters. Next year in this space, it's a toss-up whether McMahon will occupy this space, a later position on this list, or no position at all. He did, though, remain in firm control of the WWF throughout all of 1993. **Last Year: 1**

2

ERIC BISCHOFF
World Championship Wrestling

POSITION: WCW V.P./Executive Producer

AGE: 38

YEARS IN POSITION: Less than one

No one predicted the rise of mid-level announcer Eric Bischoff to being the most influential member of WCW management. Bischoff sped past the demoted Ole Anderson, who replaced Bill Watts as Vice President in Charge of Wrestling Operations, and became the favorite son of Bill Shaw and Bob Dhue, the two corporate heads of WCW. Bischoff grew to have such influence because his interest was in production and television. When WCW became virtually a television promotion, with little stress on the success of arena show business, Bischoff rose to the occasion. Bischoff took some controversial chances, including taping syndicated television months in advance, which in effect revealed who would be champions by the time the show aired months later. It was seen within TBS at a coup for Bischoff because the tapings took place as Disney, but was ridiculed within wrestling as damaging to the credibility and mystery of wrestling. Bischoff was the force behind the signing of Gene Okerlund, although he did not create significant increases in key numbers. Look for more of the same with mixed results in 1994. **Last Year: X**

3**PAT PATTERSON**
World Wrestling Federation**POSITION: Vice President of Wrestling Operations****AGE: 53****YEARS IN POSITION: 6 (with one interruption)**

Pat Patterson held steady in his position as the third most powerful person in wrestling this year. While he has no chance of becoming higher than no. 2 because he will always be lower than Vince McMahon or whoever heads up the WWF (be it WWF President Linda McMahon or Vince McMahon's 24 year-old son Shane), he remains a powerful force behind the day-to-day activities of the WWF. As Vice President of Wrestling Operations and booker since 1986, Patterson has defied all rules of the supposed duration of bookers' effectiveness. The extent of how heavily McMahon relies upon Patterson's advice and experience is not known, although after Patterson resigned from the WWF in 1992 amidst allegations of sexual misconduct, the WWF appeared to lack direction. That direction returned this year, although inconsistently effective, in the push of Lex Luger and Yokozuna, along with the establishing of Razor Ramon, Bret Hart, and Shawn Michaels as major-league players. Patterson, assuming the trial does not cause major shake-ups in the WWF, will make this list next year. **Last Year: #3**

5**JIM CORNETTE**
Smoky Mountain Wrestling**POSITION: President (*plus WWF performer)****AGE: 32****YEARS IN POSITION: 2**

Jim Cornette moves up this list for two reasons. For one, he has increased exposure in the WWF as the manager of the WWF Champion Yokozuna as part of a working agreement Cornette established with the WWF. Secondly, in 1993 Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling not only survived another year, but showed signs of longevity, supporting more wrestlers and employees than in 1992. The longevity of SMW's existence despite all odds being against Cornette establishes him as a legitimate promoter in pro wrestling worthy of recognition and certainly a powerful position among power brokers for years to come. With Bobby Heenan's departure from the WWF, Cornette's role in the WWF becomes all the more important, although he is not likely to take on too many new duties, such as Heenan's role as color commentator on Monday Night Raw and Wrestling Challenge. As the youngest member of this list by several years, Cornette has many more years to learn, gain experience, and take advantage of opportunities that could make him one of the longer-running occupants of this list. **Last Year: #8**

4**JERRY JARRETT**
USWA/World Wrestling Federation**POSITION: Owner (*plus WWF booking asst.)****AGE: 51****YEARS IN POSITION: 15 (*less than one)**

Until this year, Jerry Jarrett was just a lone remaining relic of the famous group of over 20 regional promoters from the '70s. By the end of 1993, Jarrett was working full-time for the WWF as an assistant to Pat Patterson in booking the WWF in addition to remaining owner of the USWA with partner Jerry Lawler. Vince McMahon brought in Jarrett to help Patterson, who believed after nearly ten years of being McMahon's main idea-man, some fresh, experienced blood would help add new twists to the WWF's direction. It's never possible to tell who comes up with specific ideas that are executed in the WWF, although already Jarrett's mark is being noticed in some ways in the direction of the WWF. Jarrett has left the USWA to be run on a day-to-day basis by Lawler. Given his offer to sell his half of the USWA to Indianapolis promoter Jeff Cohen, Jarrett's heart may not be in the USWA and regional promoting, so his position on this list is based more on his WWF position at the end of 1993 than the muscles he was flexing in the USWA. If Jarrett remains in the WWF in an influential position, he'll make this list again: **Last Year: #10**

6**RIC FLAIR**
World Championship Wrestling**POSITION: Head of WCW Booking Committee (plus lead babyface wrestler)****AGE: 45****YEARS IN POSITION: Less than one**

Ric Flair moved down this list from the no. 4 position last year, although only because of the increased power of Jerry Jarrett and Jim Cornette. Flair showed he is still able to carry the torch of a major national promotion. He is not the wrestler who alone can take WCW to the next level, although with the help of competent booking and a solid front office, Flair has a few years of main event wrestling left in him. Most remarkable for Flair was his ability to be a major player in WCW despite booker Dusty Rhodes's attempts to downplay his role in the ring and behind the scenes. Every time Flair was in a television main event, ratings sharply rose. Every time Flair was a major part of a pay-per-view, interest rose. As a result, when the time came to replace Dusty Rhodes, Flair was a leading candidate to become the number two voice behind Eric Bischoff on wrestling decisions. In fact, early in 1994, Flair did become the leader of the new booking committee. In 1994, if he takes the initiative, Flair could move up this list. There are still questions about Flair's booking ability. **Last Year: #4**

7

DUSTY RHODES

World Championship Wrestling

POSITION: WCW Talent Coordinator (booker)

AGE: 48

YEARS IN POSITION: 3

Rhodes ended 1993 on shaky ground with his employer and early in the year certainly dropped off this list with Ric Flair moving up the ladder of influence in WCW. Rhodes, given a figure head position of "senior consultant," was still around WCW early in 1994, but with less power, helping in the transition from his run as booker to a committee led by Flair. Throughout most of 1993, though, Rhodes was in a higher position than no. 7 on this list, promoting WCW through a year of decreasing business and fan apathy toward many aspects of WCW, especially the booking. He began the year in the no. 9 position, but when Bill Watts left WCW, Rhodes became Erik Bischoff's right-hand man. As the year wore on, Rhodes's booking became the subject of criticism from many parties, including wrestlers and the media, and early in 1994, Rhodes was finally demoted. Rhodes will be hard-pressed to make the top 10 list at the end of 1994. **Last Year: #9**

8

DAVE MELTZER

Smoky Mountain Wrestling

POSITION:

AGE: 33

YEARS IN POSITION: 2

For more than ten years, Dave Meltzer has gained credibility through the weekly publication of an industry trade journal, the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter*. Nineteen-ninety-three saw Meltzer's relentless coverage of the steroid abuse in professional wrestling throughout the '80s—which included exhaustive research on steroids in general and how their abuse specifically applied to professional wrestling—become a contributing factor to the federal government's indictment of Vince McMahon. Without Meltzer, it is possible this story would not have been covered to the extent that it was, especially in the first half of 1992, to the point that the U.S. Justice Department began an investigation. Meltzer was one of *New York Post* columnist Phil Mushnick's major sources for background and current information in his relentless series of articles... Meltzer's publication is widely read internationally by most wrestlers and promoters... **Last Year: #7**

9

ANTONIO PENA

Asestencia Asesoria, y Administracion

POSITION: Promoter, Booker

AGE:

YEARS IN POSITION: 1

May 4, 1992, EMLL Vice President Antonio Pena along with lead babyface Konnan El Barbaro collected their final paychecks from EMLL, resigned, and formed AAA. Within seven months, AAA had become Mexico's largest, most successful promotion. In 1993, Pena took his initial success in Mexico and brought it to the United States with a sold out crowd in Los Angeles. International Wrestling Council promoter Ron Skoler, in coordination with Pena's AAA, had a string of successful tours in California. As 1993 came to a close, Pena and Skoler had plans to expand their arena tours to other major markets, including New York and Chicago. The only thing holding Pena back from being an even more influential player in the States is his lack of flexibility in terms of U.S.-style business acumen. In all likelihood, in 1994, Pena will rise on this list as the major force behind the AAA/IWC tours in the U.S. **Last Year: X**

10

PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY

ECW/World Wrestling Network

POSITION: Booker, Producer

AGE: 27

YEARS IN POSITION: 2

While this position arguably deserves to be held by either Tod Gordon (ECW Owner) or Jim Crockett (owner of upstart WWN), it goes instead to the 27 year old Paul E. Dangerously (Paul Heyman). He is more responsible for the unique direction in which ECW has gone in terms of TV product in 1993, although he's been able to take those chances thanks to Gordon. Crockett, formerly one of the two most powerful men in wrestling, is a shoe-in on this list next year if he starts the WWN, but as of now, WWN is in the planning stages other than one trial house show last Summer. Dangerously is in a position to be Crockett's right-hand man in Crockett's WWN. As 1993 came to a close, Dangerously had a tremendous amount of power in ECW, but more importantly, was a big part of two progressive promotions. To move up this list next year, Heyman will have to help WWN become a force in the States. **Last Year: X**

NOTEBOOK

1993 POSITIONS 11-15: Tod Gordon (ECW owner/promoter), Hulk Hogan (free-agent wrestler), Linda McMahon (President World Wrestling Federation), Vader (Wrestler, WCW), (tie) Ron Skoler (IWC promoter) and Jim Crockett (WWN owner, promoter).

LAST YEAR'S TOP 10: Vince McMahon, Bill Watts (Vice President WCW), Pat Patterson, Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Jim Ross, Dave Meltzer, Jim Cornette, Dusty Rhodes, and Jerry Jarrett.

TOP 100

1993 WORLDWIDE RATINGS

1	Kenta Kobashi (1)	All Japan	51	Chris Candido (NR)	SMW
2	Toshiaki Kawada (5)	All Japan	52	Dirty White Boy (99)	SMW
3	Hiroshi Hase (3)	New Japan	53	Too Cold Scorpio (NR)	WCW
4	Jushin Liger (2)	New Japan	54	Owen Hart (68)	WWF
5	Vader (11)	WCW	55	Sting (34)	WCW
6	Chris Benoit (4)	New Japan	56	Eddie Gilbert (54)	USWA
7	Mitsuhara Misawa (16)	All Japan	57	Akira Nogami (49)	New Japan
8	Stan Hansen (25)	All Japan	58	Dustin Rhodes (27)	WCW
9	Shawn Michaels (8)	WWF	59	Genichiro Tenryu (66)	WAR
10	Bret Hart (12)	WWF	60	Terry Gordy (20)	All Japan
11	Ric Flair (7)	WCW	61	Terry Taylor (47)	WCW
12	Sabu (42)	ECW	62	David Finley (NR)	England
13	Dan Kroffat (18)	All Jaan	63	Tommy Rogers (70)	All Japan
14	Negro Casas (10)	EMLL	64	Kensuke Sasaki (17)	New Japan
15	Heavy Metal (NR)	AAA	65	La Parca (NR)	AAA
16	Eddy Guerrero (38)	AAA	66	Steven Regal (NR)	WCW
17	Steve Austin (33)	WCW	67	Scott Steiner (44)	WWF
18	Keiji Muto (13)	New Japan	68	Silver King (62)	EMLL
19	Brian Pillman (14)	WCW	69	Ricky Morton (74)	SMW
20	Masa Chono (15)	New Japan	70	Brad Armstrong (36)	WCW
21	Terry Funk (50)	ECW	71	Jerry Lawler (NR)	USWA
22	Psicosis (NR)	AAA	72	Fuerza Guerrera (46)	AAA
23	Tsuyoshi Kikuchi (6)	All Japan	73	Brian Christopher (NR)	USWA
24	Nobuhiko Takada (56)	UWFI	74	Jerry Estrada (55)	AAA
25	El Samurai (43)	New Japan	75	Love Machine (NR)	AAA
26	Great Sasuke (30)	Michinoku	76	Bestia Salvaje (31)	EMLL
27	1-2-3 Kid (29)	WWF	77	Chris Jericho (NR)	SMW
28	Steve Williams (52)	All Japan	78	El Gran Hamada (21)	UWA
29	Ultimo Dragon Asai (19)	WAR	79	Shiro Koshinaka (NR)	New Japan
30	Rick Steamboat (9)	WCW	80	Mr. Perfect (57)	WWF
31	Tracy Smothers (75)	SMW	81	Steve Armstrong (NR)	SMW
32	Jun Akiyama (rookie)	All Japan	82	Jeff Jarrett (60)	WWF
33	El Hijo Del Santo (35)	AAA	83	Chris Adams (96)	GWF
34	Jimmy Del Rey (NR)	SMW/WWF	84	Scott Armstrong (NR)	SMW
35	Yoshinari Ogawa (40)	All Japan	85	Paul Orndorff (73)	WCW
36	Cactus Jack (32)	WCW	86	Richard Slinger (78)	All Japan
37	Rey Mysterio Jr. (NR)	AAA	87	Pat Tanaka (94)	ECW
38	Marty Jannetty (45)	WWF	88	Johnny Smith (NR)	England
39	Akira Taue (NR)	All Japan	89	Fatu (NR)	WWF
40	The Boss (92)	WCW	90	El Dandi (64)	EMLL
41	Blue Panther (NR)	AAA	91	Shinjiro Otani (NR)	New Japan
42	Arn Anderson (22)	WCW	92	Octagon (NR)	AAA
43	Super Delphin (NR)	Michinoku	93	Riki Choshu (79)	New Japan
44	Tom Prichard (61)	SMW/WWF	94	Atsushi Onita (82)	FMW
45	Masa Fuchi (28)	All Japan	95	Marcus Bagwell (NR)	WCW
46	Dean Malenko (NR)	Independent	96	Mike Winner (NR)	Independent
47	Shane Douglas (48)	ECW	97	Flyboy Rocco Rock (NR)	ECW
48	Takayuki Iizuka (67)	New Japan	98	Bam Bam Bigelow (51)	WWF
49	Doug Furnas (58)	All Japan	99	Ted DiBiase (41)	WWF
50	Bobby Eaton (26)	WCW	100	Naoki Sano (37)	UWFI

Pro Wrestling Torch's "Top 100 Worldwide Ratings" are compiled by an impromptu editorial board. The ratings are based on in-ring skills and quality of matches from Jan. 1, 1993-Dec. 31, 1993. A wrestler's ranking has nothing to do with their position in the promotion they work for, nor does it reflect the quality of their gimmick. Charisma, though, is a factor as part of in-ring skill, although the vast majority of the criteria for being ranked is based on workrate in 1993.

Departures From 1992's Top 100 Ratings

Wrestler	'92 Ranking
Jumbo Tsuruta	23 (injured)
Barry Windham	24 (inactive since July)
Rick Rude	53
Konnor El Barbaro	59
Randy Savage	62
Scotty Flamingo	69 (now manager, Johnny Polo)
George Takano	71 (inactive most of year)
Plus: Hawk (76), Rick Steiner (77), Masa Funaki (80), Bobby Fulton (81) Davey Boy Smith (82), Pirata Morgan (84), Doug Gilbert (85), Gary Young (86), Rod Price (87), Jerry Lynn (88), Tim Horner (88), Tito Santana (90), Robert Gibson (91), Rick Martel (93), Stan Lane (95, inactive most of year), Danny Davis (97), Ron Simmons (98), Johnny Ace (100).	

Ratings Notebook

Kobashi was the unanimous pick for number one overall. He had top matches against Williams, Hansen, and Kawada among others in 1993. Kawada was no. 2 on all but one ballot... Flair drops out of the top ten this year. In the *Wrestling Observer* ratings he was rated no.1 in '81-'87 and in '89, no. 2 in '88 and '90. There were no ratings in 1990 or '91. He dropped to no. 7 last year... *Wrestling Observer* international rookie of the year, Jun Akiyama, debuts impressively at no. 32... The biggest drop from last year's top ten is Steamboat, dropping from no. 9 to no. 30... Rude was the highest ranked currently active wrestler on last year's list to completely drop off the top 100... Del Rey of the Heavenly Bodies made the highest debut of American-based wrestlers... Heavy Metal made the best debut at no. 15 followed by Psicosis at no. 22...

Affiliations: Number in top 100 (Number in top 25)

WCW	17 (4)	USWA	04 (0)
All Japan	14 (6)	UWFI	02 (1)
New Japan	14 (6)	WAR	02 (0)
AAA	11 (3)	FMW	01 (0)
WWF	11 (2)	GWF	01 (0)
SMW	09 (0)	Michinoku Pro	01 (0)
ECW	05 (2)	UWA	01 (0)
EMLL	04 (1)	Other	03 (0)

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BRUCE MITCHELL'S (Guaranteed All True) THIRD ANNUAL YEAR-END

"It's hard to tell... it's hard to tell... when all your love's in vain."

—Robert Johnson

All right.

I've had it.

The last two years I've poured my heart and soul into producing a quiz where you, the wrestling fan, could show your knowledge of America's most beloved sport.

And how have you responded?

No right answers. That's right. Not one.

Hell, forget right answers. None of you hotshot readers even sent in a ballot.

What an embarrassment. You would have thought I was trying to sell tickets to a WCW house show.

And, unlike in one of those godawful road fiascos that Turner put on, you could participate in the Quiz for free—even in New Jersey for chrissakes, and win a valuable prize.

Which brings me to yet another complaint.

The valuable prize was head chair on the WCW booking committee. Do you have any idea what I had to go through so that male Mannequin Eric Bischoff would agree to let some *Torch* reader be booker? Luckily post-traumatic stress is blocking that particular memory.

But no! None of you *Torch* readers could be bothered to fill out a measly little ballot. Y'all have jobs. Families. Fun things to do. You think you're all so special. Strawberries. It was the strawberries.

What? Oh yeah.

So not only are you clowns responsible for ignoring all of my hard work and months of high level research, but YOU, (yes, you!), not Bill Shaw or Bob Dhue, are the one ultimate responsible for that six-figure midget murder mini-movie because if just one of you had filled out a ballot, well suffice it to say that those memorable BattleBowl results might have been just a little bit different.

But that was last year. And I've seen the error in my approach.

No one sent in a ballot because, shockingly, no one outside of Terry Funk cares about a spot on the WCW booking committee.

So this year I've rectified my mistake and obtained for *Torch* readers a much better incentive for first prize—the crown jewel of the treasure chest that is American pro wrestling.

Titan Towers.

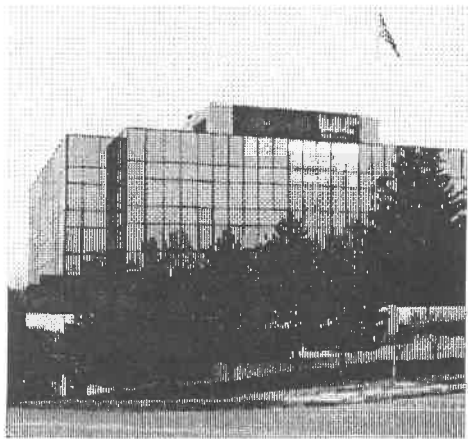
Four stainless steel stories of wrestling greatness. The crucible where wrestling's most popular show "Monday Night Raw" is forged. Millions in state of the art television equipment. Hours of wrestling videos. Sumptuous office space. The finest gym equipment. Shredding machines.

The same center of the Titan wrestling universe where the great minds of professional wrestling, the Pattersons, the Dillons, the Jarretts, and the McMahons put their heads together to engineer triumphs like the Lex Express, Men on a Mission, and "Double J" Jeff Jarrett.

All yours. Just fill out a correct ballot.

But perhaps you, the discerning *Torch* reader, is concerned that those nitpickers in the Justice

Department might actually confiscate your hard earned winnings. Perhaps you carefully read the McMahon indictment issue of the *Torch* and you realize that the Justice Department is seeking to confiscate Titan Towers as a penalty for committing all of those felonies.



Never fear. Just because certain killjoys overreacted to the indictments because they take things too seriously even though—you know—it's only 'rasslin, is no reason to fret. Titan Sports legal consul Jerry McDevitt will be using the precedent-setting "Anyway Monday Night Raw Defense."

The "Anyway Monday Night Raw Defense," you mutter to yourself?

It goes like this: "Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, you should find my client not guilty because the government is just picking on Vince because you know, look at the NFL, they do it too and everybody knows all athletes used steroids because they were legal and nobody cares about steroids anyway and don't listen to those witnesses anyway because they are not very nice because if they were nice why were they in this business anyway and anyway Vince just lent his steroids to his good friend Hulk and Vince gives a lot to charity and anyway shouldn't the government be going after the real criminals like welfare cheats or all those people that I see, you know who I mean, on those street corners with paper bags and the WWF has real testing now look at the 1-2-3 Kid and they are going to give the belt maybe to the Excellence of Execution and anyway Monday Night Raw is a real good show at least on the nights it's live and the Feds should drop the charges because of every American's godgiven right to, uh, watch wrestling. The defense rests."

See! Nothing to worry about. Just sharpen that pencil, scratch that noggin, and fill out that ballot and faster than you can say "inflated attendance figures" you can get out of that bingo parlor, blow off Jim Crockett and Dennis Coraluzzo, make Sabu champ, and you and Paul E. can be running things from Titan Towers like God and the Variety Club always intended.

Here we go! Remember, this is professional wrestling, so, no cheating!

PLEASE USE SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER TO RECORD YOUR ANSWERS! YOU HAVE 60 MINUTES, ALTHOUGH WE MAY SHAVE TIME WITHOUT WARNING. BEGIN...

1. This summer "King of Philadelphia" Eddie Gilbert and Paul E. Dangerously hit the streets of Philadelphia so they could tape impromptu segments of the King meeting his public. One fan took a look at Eddie, recognized him, and laughed. How did that fan respond when Paul E. asked if he had any advice for the King?

- a) "You should make up with that Missy Hyatt. She sure is hot."
- b) "When are you going to wrestle Jerry Lawler again? I just can't get enough of that match."
- c) "Try to go back to WCW. I bet you could get the book."
- d) "Yeah. Don't drink and drive."

2. Hulk Hogan was quoted in several media outlets, including the Oct. 11 issue of *People Weekly* magazine, as stating "There's one thing I've learned about the entertainment world. Once you commit yourself, you set out and go 100 percent." He was referring to...

- a) his old habit of sticking long needles full of steroids into his buttocks.
- b) his recent habit of lying about the frequency of his old habit.
- c) his rumored deal with the Justice Department prosecutors to turn States' evidence against Vince McMahon in exchange for immunity from prosecution.
- d) his decision to wear a pink tutu in the box office bomb "Mr. Nanny."

3. Pick the tagline that became synonymous with one *Torch* columnist's work.

- a) Chris Zavis—"Never actually been to Japan..."
- b) Carlie Gill—"A girl. No fooling."
- c) Mark Madden—"Wrestling's most beloved columnist."
- d) Bruce Mitchell—"Wrestling's most respected columnist."

4. Now pick the two taglines from #3 above that can actually be proven to be accurate.

5. Ex-WCW vice president Jim Herd or Smoky Mountain Wrestling money man Rick Rubin? Put an "H" or an "R" next to the letter that shows which of Jim Cornette's former or current bosses did the following:

- a) Forced his promotion to book at least one wrestler called "The Ding Dong."



- b) Forced his promotion to book at least one wrestler called "The Hunchback."

- c) Forced his promotion to book at least one wrestler called "The Mummy."

- d) Dropped Rick Steamboat as a wrestler after he worked hard to put lead heel Lex Luger over.

- e) Dropped Tim Horner as a wrestler after he worked hard to put lead heel Tony Anthony over.

- f) Produced Mick Jagger's latest album.

- g) Produced Dave Meltzer's 900 line.

6. Texas is traditionally one of the wild and woolly hotbeds of pro wrestling. Pick one thing from the list below that did not happen in Texas wrestling in 1993.

- a) A promotion not only couldn't get much of anyone to pay to see it, but actually had to bribe fans with free soda to get them to attend.

- b) A black wrestler tried to get heat by claiming he was the reason a white wrestler's blonde wife really left him, and of course no one cared.

- c) That white wrestler ripped another wrestler's hair weave transplant out by the bloody roots.

- d) A has-been wrestler extorted a thousand dollars from the promoter of a charity show for the children of the wrestler's truly has-been brother.

- e) John Arezzi agreed to be paid \$30,000 by a concert promotion for a guaranteed show when the WWF and WCW with their hours of television exposure had not drawn half of that amount in several years.

- f) A bad show featuring the Funks, Jim Cornette, The Heavenly Bodies, Dick Murdoch, and Eddie Gilbert.

7. FanBoy Oddity Mike Lano promoted a Sam Muchnick Tribute Banquet in St. Louis attended by several dozen people (if you count the guest wrestlers) and claimed that it may have been the greatest convention ever thrown. Which of these actual highlights supports this contention?

a) The hotel that was the location of the convention lost several hundred dollars when the claimed swarms of fans failed to appear.

b) Independent wrestlers from neighboring states drove several hours to work for free only to find that the claimed scouts from the major promotions including New Japan and All Japan were not there and never intended to be there.

c) A collection was taken for the late Pat O'Connor's children's college fund—despite the fact that O'Connor had no children.

d) A collection was taken for the late Frank Goodish's son's college fund.

8. What was the most ironic facet of that contribution to Geoff Goodish's college fund?

a) It was not enough to cover the bill for one semester's worth of textbooks.

b) Mike Lano tried to get Barbara Goodish to leave her middle-school-aged son alone during his first out of town hotel trip so she could attend the banquet.

c) Between the fact that All Japan Pro Wrestling holds an annual Brody Memorial card and donates part of the gate to a trust fund for Geoff and that Frank Goodish had banked his a substantial sum before he died, Geoff Goodish could attend any university in America and pay the tuition bill without a problem.

9. Titan Sports CEO Vincent K. McMahon stood in the middle of the Mid-South Coliseum in Memphis, Tenn. and stated that he "came from New York City to see the biggest embarrassment of Jerry Lawler's career." He was referring to:

a) Kevin Lawler.

b) His explanation for why he fired Dutch Mantell.

c) The fact that Lawler is so old his son is now an experienced main event wrestler.

d) His alleged cartoon party at the Notel Motel and celebratory after-party at Value City.

e) His upcoming match against a pot-bellied referee.

10. Pick the wrestler who did not sit out at least part of the year on a lucrative Lloyds of London workman's compensation insurance contract.

a) Road Warrior Animal.

b) Ted DiBiase.

c) Nikita Koloff

15. Wrestling fans had a veritable cornucopia of memorable pay-per-view action to enjoy in 1993. Test your pay-per-view I.Q. by matching the matches below with the events on which they occurred.

a) Davey Boy Smith vs. Wild Bill Irwin.

b) Scorpio & Bagwell vs. Tex Slazenger & Shanghai Pierce.

c) Cactus Jack vs. Yoshi Kwan.

d) Razor Ramon vs. Bob Backlund.

e) Erik Watts & Paul Roma vs. Brian Nobbs & Johnny B. Badd.

f) Shockmaster vs. Awesome Kong.

g) Bam Bam Bigelow vs. Hacksaw Duggan.

1. Wrestlemania

2. SuperBrawl

3. BattleBowl

4. King of the Ring

5. Starrcade

6. Beach Blast

7. Fall Brawl

d) Kerry Von Erich.

11. Pick the one name on this list that did not appear in the *Torch* or *Observer* results during the year 1993.

a) Primo Carnero Jr.

b) Paul Jones Jr.

c) Winnie the Grizzly

d) The Conductor Freight Train Freddie

e) Lady Macbeth

f) Blue Flame

g) Ultimate Warrior

12. Which of the following is an actual quote from "Warrior Wisdom," the personal philosophy of former paid escort and pro wrestler Jim Hellwig, available in poster form for only \$24.95 from Ultimate Creations?

a) "Go placidly amidst the noise and haste and remember what peace there is in silence."

b) "If you love something, set it free. If it returns to you, that is true love..."

c) "It's just like swallowing oysters."

d) "I love you. You love me. We're a great big family."

e) "Win if you can, lose if you must, but always cheat."

e) "Be prepared."

f) "As the innocence of your youth fades responsibly into the maturities of adulthood, you will be confronted by those who will ask you at times, go so far as to even demand that you compromise your beliefs blah, blah, blah."

13. The World Wrestling Network was in the news spotlight several times in the *Torch* including multi-part interviews with Jim Crockett and Paul E. Dangerously and a profile of the former money man Jim Hudson. What was the 1993 highlight for this hot up and coming promotion?

a) The debut television tapings in Texas.

b) The signing of a strong mix of solid main eventers like Jake "The Snake" Roberts and Road Warrior Hawk with up and coming stars like Sabu to exclusive contracts.

c) The unveiling of the first television series produced exclusively in High Definition Television in North America.

d) The announcement of a series of arena shows in the old Mid-Atlantic area.

e) The appointment of long-time promoter Jim Crockett to the presidency of the WWN in November when his non-compete clause with WCW ran out.

f) The television tapings at the prestigious Manhattan Center.

g) The signing of a lucrative overseas television syndication deal.

h) There was no highlight since nothing actually ever happened.

14. Pick the pushed wrestler who was not related, either by blood or marriage, to WCW talent coordinator Dusty Rhodes.

a) The Equalizer

b) Nasty Boy Saggs

c) The Shockmaster

d) Uncle Freddie

e) Dustin Rhodes

f) Ric Flair





16. Fans of strong-style wrestling rejoiced when sports bars and pay-per-view cable touted the U.S. debut of the Union of Professional Wrestling Force International as "Live! From Osaka Japan! Real shoot wrestling action at its finest." What was the one truthful part of those ads?

- a) The action was live.
- b) The action was actually "real."
- c) The action was a shoot.
- d) The action was from Osaka, Japan.

17. Eddie Gilbert gave all of his hardcore admirers quite a scare in 1993 when he stated that he was going to give up pro wrestling in favor of running for elected office as a conservative Republican in his native Tennessee. What is his best credential as a conservative Republican?

- a) His association with several failed business concerns.
- b) His bleached blond hair.
- c) His habit of throwing fire at his opponents.
- d) His reputation for clean living.
- e) His three failed marriages before he was 30.
- f) His habit of listening to Rush Limbaugh

18. Ron Skoler broke new ground for independent promoters in the U.S. in 1993 when he ran an enormously successful Lucha Libre tour in association with Antonio Pena's AAA promotion. After the tour, Skolar had a brainstorm to make this concept even more marketable to its rabid fans. What was that money-making innovation?

- a) Booking a Jushin Liger vs. Psychosis match.
- b) Bringing in Vampire Casanova from EMLL to face Konnan.

c) Promoting an all Midget World Title Tournament.

d) Bringing in Hulk Hogan to team with Konnan.

e) Booking a guy in a big White Rabbit costume.

19. The USWA scored quite a coup in 1993 when it was able to entice the legendary billiards king Minnesota Fats, the inspiration for Jackie Gleason's character in the Oscar winning movie for best picture in 1963, "The Hustler," to endorse Jeff Jarrett on camera as "simply fabulous!" Immediately after Fats, the world's most famous pool player, filmed his spot for Jarrett Promotions, he made news by:

a) Winning a million dollar billiards tournament in Las Vegas.

b) Signing an endorsement deal with Anhauser Busch to promote Natural Light beer.

c) Recording a cameo as one of the celebrity callers on NBC's Thursday night hit *Frasier*.

d) Being involuntarily committed to a mental institution after he was found wandering the streets of Memphis.

20. Ex-WCW chief Jim Herd and former Florida Championship wrestling head honcho Wayne Coulter founded the Real Wrestling Hotline—as opposed to those other wrestling hotlines—if you get their drift. Which of the following actually ran as "Real" programming (only 99 cents a minute) for this Hotline during 1993?

a) An opportunity to play tic tac toe on the phone while the prerecorded voice of Paul E. Dangerously calls you "stupid."

b) A psychic who revealed the future of bigtime wrestling stars like Sting.

c) Ex-WWF announcer Boni Blackstone declaring that she was ready to answer the biggest question in the sport today: "Is pro wrestling real or fake?"

d) Tour promoter John Arezzi raving about the quality of his own overseas tour.

e) Dave Meltzer sleepily asking listeners, "So, what else is going on?" then making them wait while he looked for his notepad.

f) Lance Russell interviewing Jim Herd on how to save the wrestling business.

g) All of the above.

21. *Torch* columnist Mark Madden had a remarkable year attempting to achieve his stated goal of cracking the *Torch's* "Wrestling's Ten Most Powerful People" list. What desperation move was too much even for Mark?

a) Making TBS and Hank Aaron aware of

WCW Vice President Bill Watts' views on race-relations and thus getting Watts fired.

b) Taking up Ole Anderson's silly offer of ten thousand dollars to any "rag writer" willing to "face him in the ring for ten minutes."

c) Falling for the hype of the "Lex Express" and giving that desperate bus tour positive play in both the *Torch* and the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*.

d) Carrying Missy Hyatt's poodle through a stunned crowd of wrestling fans outside the arena at Starrcade.



e) Receiving a threatening letter at work from Titan's legal team because he suggested on the Real Wrestling Hotline that Linda McMahon replace that famed oil painting of Vince with a "picture of a pile of dog vomit."

f) Finishing in eighth place in the *Wrestling Observer* poll for Most Obnoxious Personality.

g) Writing one column that didn't refer to himself at least a dozen times.

22. Caucasian Wrestling Association head Jim Cornette stated in a memorable letter to the *Torch* that among other things he "couldn't possibly give a sh--t what the NAACP thinks of me." How can you tell Cornette wasn't just whistling Dixie?

a) The fact that he employs no blacks in his front office.

b) The fact that he employs no blacks in his ring crew.

c) The fact that he employs one black in his talent crew.

d) The fact virtually no blacks attend his shows.

e) The fact that one of his lead babyfaces wraps himself in the Confederate Flag and the other actually has the word "White" in his ring name.

f) All of the above.



23. True or False: *Torch* Columnist Chris Zavisa appeared on a Japanese game show dressed in women's clothing.

25. WCW broke new ground in 1993 with its six-figure mini-movies featuring only the finest in state-of-the-art editing and production values. This innovation reached its apex with the famous beach scene that, like the one in "From Here to Eternity," set a new standard for the industry to which it belonged. What was the best part of that eight minute jaw dropper?

- a) The midget with the fin on his back who tried to murder Sting.
- b) The sight of the British Bulldog "sprinting" across the beach.
- c) The twins who, unlike those adorable Olsen girls on "Full House," actually said their lines in unison.
- d) The sight of the British Bulldog "playing volleyball."
- e) A dead guy dying and rising to the ceiling of the arena."

26. Perhaps the hottest angle of the year occurred in Mexico when Konnan el Barbaro lost a "loser must retire" match to Cien Caras when Jake Roberts interfered. What was the one flaw in this otherwise well-thought-out scenario?

- a) The incensed fans tried to kill Jake so he quit the promotion.
- b) The other wrestlers got jealous because of the attention Caras got.

24. Nineteen-ninety-three was another great year for memorable utterances by the stars of the wrestling business. Match the person on the left with his or her quote on the right.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| a) Vince McMahon | 1. "One of the people that helped me a lot (in the beginning) and probably didn't realize it was Arn Anderson." |
| b) Jerry Lawler | 2. "This man (Vince McMahon) is my true hero." |
| c) Kevin Sullivan | 3. "When you're faced with the decision to take drugs, just say no." |
| d) Mike Weber | 4. "The King isn't going to take this lying down" (since that may be what got him in trouble in the first place). |
| e) Sid Vicious | 5. "It's ironic that the person they would charge has single-handedly done more than any one human being—maybe in the world, certainly in the United States—to clean up his particular sport." |
| f) Lex Luger | 6. "(Two wrestlers trying to kill each other with scissors) proves that what you see in the ring is real." |
| g) Hulk Hogan | 7. "I thought it all was a shoot. Thanks for smartening me up, Tod." |

c) The *Torch* was too busy covering ECW because anything said in Spanish doesn't count.

d) The governing Athletic Commissioner thought the stipulation was legitimate and would not allow Konnan to come back, so AAA lost its top babyface.

27. Brain Teaser Section: How can Sabu be dubbed "wrestling's hottest free agent" by the *Torch's* editor when no one has offered him a big money contract?

28. Cactus Jack sacrificed himself for the good of WCW when he suffered a concussion and several broken bones in a pair of brutal television matches with Vader and was hospitalized. He followed that by injuring himself in yet another match with Vader at Halloween Havoc. WCW repaid Jack for his blood, sweat, and bones with...

- a) a sweet performance bonus after the pay-per-view.
- b) an all-expenses trip to Hawaii for himself and his family.
- c) a job in the booking office.
- d) a substantial pay-cut.

29. WCW celebrated the rich tradition of this sport at Slamboree. Besides the sight of Thunderbolt Patterson in the ring, what other feats did veterans achieve in 1993 to make fans proud of wrestling's legends?

- a) Verne Gagne's appearance in Bankruptcy Court.
- b) Fritz Von Erich's tabloid clippings.
- c) Austin Idol's Alabama promotion.
- d) Rick Steamboat's spitting kerosene while wearing a rubber lizard suit.
- e) Gorilla Monsoon's new job on a television



Bingo Show under his real name.

- f) All of the above.

30. True or False: The 18 page "Meltzer" issue of *Pro Wrestling Sushi* featured a two-page centerfold.

ANSWER KEY

(Hey, wait a minute! You could just copy this for your entry. No fair! I'm telling!)

(1) d; (2) d; (3) d; (4) a,b; (5) H: a, b, d, g, R: c, e, f; (6) f; (7) d; (8) c; (9) e; (10) d; (11) g; (12) f; (13) h; (14) d; (15) Who cares?; (16) d; (17) f; (18) e; (19) d; (20) g; (21) g; (22) f; (23) false (only women's make-up); (24) a-5, b-4, c-7, d-6, e-1, f-3, g-2; (25) b; (27) "Hype"; (28) d; (29) f; (30) false; Extra Credit: False.

Quiz Contestants Have a Chance to Win...

First Prize: Titan Towers.

Second Prize: A seat on the McMahon trial.

Third Prize: A regular slot on the Real Wrestling Hotline.

Fourth Prize: A spot as a *Pro Wrestling Torch* columnist.

1993

Japanese wrestling ENCYCLOPEDIA

This was the year that money flowed like water in the Land of the Rising Sun. It was only a few years ago that the experts debated if Japan could support three major wrestling promotions. Now there are well over a dozen and many of them are not only surviving, but thriving. Just one year ago, I referred to The Big Three—All Japan, New Japan, and All Japan Women as financially profitable companies with big fan followings. In 1993, that would have to be expanded with both FMW and the UWI—I joining the ranks.

In 1992, American politics was nicknamed "The Year of the Woman," as more females than ever before were elected to national and state offices. Japan had its own "Year of the Woman" in 1993, but it was in the area of professional wrestling, not politics. The All Japan Women had their best year since the days of the Crush Girls and Dump Matsumoto, plus they carried the smaller groups—JWP and LLPW—along for a profitable ride.

It was the year for throwing out the old rules and writing up a whole set of new ones. The first and most important new rule being to join hands with your former enemies. It was a great year for Japan wrestling both at arenas and at the bank.

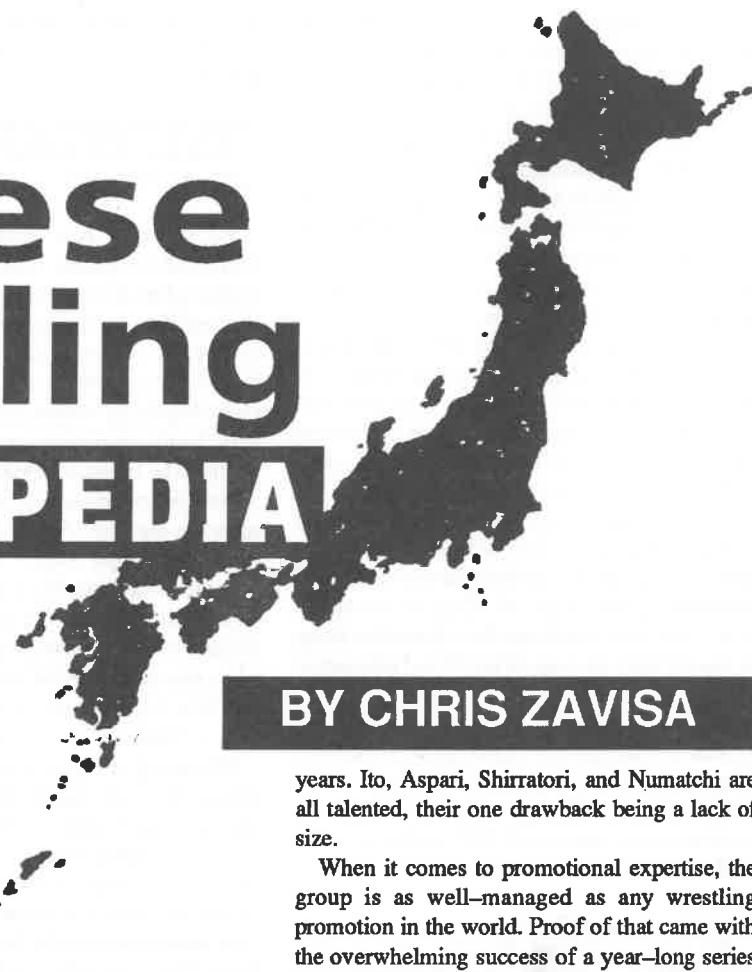
1993'S #1 PROMOTION IN JAPAN ALL JAPAN WOMEN (1991: #3; 1992: #3)

The operative word in Japan for 1993 seemed to be "change." After 40 years of rule by the Liberal Democratic Party, the nation's voters threw the rascals out and opted for a new political philosophy. In the world of Japanese professional wrestling, radical change also occurred. The old routine of each promotion operating in their own little world, ignoring the others, and jealously protecting its workers was thrown out of the window. The new formula was to establish a relationship among promotions, putting on big cards filled with interpromotional match-ups. As a result, there were many shows that captured the fans' imagination and yen.

Both the All Japan Women and New Japan were proponents of cooperation. Both groups showed that it was much better to unite efforts with your former rivals than fight them. The

results were big gates and high profits for both groups. There was however one significant difference. The All Japan Women improved upon the quality of their wrestling to a degree that their workrate is head-and-shoulders the best in the world. New Japan's match quality took a noticeable nosedive making it their worst athletic showing in five years. And for that reason, the All Japan Women get the nod for the number-one ranked wrestling promotion in Japan.

The factors that go into making AJW number-one are simple to analyze. First and foremost is talent. If you examine the chart listing the top 25 female wrestlers in Japan, you will quickly observe the extent to which the group dominates the field. Their depth chart is deeper than the U.S.A. Olympic Dream Team in basketball. Their big three of Toyota, Hokuto, and Kyoko Inoue nearly insure a great match on every card. They have the heavyweights in Bull Nakano and Aja Kong who can do the powermoves that the other groups lack. They have a superb group of mid-card wrestlers in Yamada, Hasegawa, Inoue, Shimoda, Mita, Minami, and Yoshinaga. They have a solid group of youngsters to pass the torch to in a few



BY CHRIS ZAVISA

years. Ito, Aspari, Shiratori, and Numatchi are all talented, their one drawback being a lack of size.

When it comes to promotional expertise, the group is as well-managed as any wrestling promotion in the world. Proof of that came with the overwhelming success of a year-long series of big shows in large arenas that did boffo box office. Just two years ago, they were lucky to sell 5,000 tickets to their annual biggest show, the Wrestlemarinpiad. This year, they had major successes at Budokan Hall, Sumo Hall, Yokohama Ice Arena, Osaka Castle, and Tokyo Bay NK Hall. For the first time, the group had cards that earned a spot on the listing of the biggest 25 audiences of the year. Management developed working relationships with the other women's groups—JWP, LLPW, and even with FMW which uses both men and women. The results were a series of dream cards that dazzled the fans. It gave fans something different and fans responded with open wallets.

The quality of the group's in-ring product is simply the best in the world. No group, male or female, can match the pace and number of moves that make up AJW bouts. They often give you more in a single bout than many other groups give in an entire show. A match with Ric Flair & Brian Pillman vs. Shawn Michaels & 1-2-3 Kid could not match the pace or frequency of the moves in a typical All Japan Women show.

DreamSlam I, the group's 25th anniversary show, was the single best card of the year, and arguably the best card of all time. But even their lesser shows clearly outperformed every other promotion in the wrestling world. Consider that on Oct. 9, they staged their annual

WrestleMania, which was filled with interpromotional matches where performers put forth 100 percent effort. The next night they ran a show at Korakuen Hall to open their tag team tournament. Every bout was four-stars or higher.

If talent, promotional expertise, and quality were not enough by themselves, there are other, perhaps less significant, reasons that AJW does as well or better than anyone else. AJW puts out the best souvenir programs in the business, lavish posters hyping the big cards which quickly become hard-to-get collectors' items, and a marketing scheme that would be the envy of Vince McMahon. At each card they sell everything from autographed photos of the stars for about \$10 each, to key chains with tiny dolls of Nakano, Hokuto, Kong, and Inoue.

They promote each major show with an elaborate press conference that lasts over an hour and is widely covered by both the wrestling press and the mainstream media. They do not miss a trick to get their foot in the door of another group to expand their fan base. When New Japan put on an exclusive show for 700 wealthy businessmen in August, there were Takako Inoue and Manami Toyota in wedding gowns posing with Hase and Chono in the bridal section of the event.

The only challenge they now face is duplicating the success of 1993 in an attempt to hold onto this top spot.

All Japan Women Timeline

1/4, Tokyo at Korakuen: Korakuen sells out for a show on the same day as New Japan Tokyo Dome card which drew 63,500. Bull Nakano & Aja Kong defeat Sakie Hasegawa.

2/10, Jūmamoto: Debbie Malenko wins the Japanese Title defeating Kauro Ito with the STF.

3/11, Nagoya: Debbie Malenko breaks her leg in a tag match and misses the rest of the year just a week into her big push to stardom.

4/2, Yokohama: DreamSlam takes place in front of one of the largest crowds to ever see female wrestling as Yokohama is sold out; fans witness five continuous hours of amazing bouts that collectively add up to the single best wrestling card of all-time.

4/11, Osaka: DreamSlam II takes place in front of 5,700 who witness a match of the year candidate as JWP wrestlers Dynamite Kansai & Mayumi Ozaki beat Toyota & Yamada for the tag titles. A slimmed-down, Bull Nakano pins another legend—Chugusa Nagayo.

5/8, Tokyo Korakuen: \$38,000 worth of DreamSlam I tapes are sold at a house show.

5/22, Hakodate: One of the largest crowds ever turns out to see a women's spot show—4,350.

8/21, Tokyo Korakuen: Akira Hokuto has two four-and-a-half star bouts against Toyota and Hotta to win the Grand Prix Tournament.

8/25, Budokan: Draws 14,500 as Aja Kong retains World Title against Dynamite Kansai.

10/9, Tokyo Bay NK Hall: In keeping its string of successes alive, 6,700 attend annual WrestleMania card.

11/28, Osaka Castle: 9,600 watch Toshiyo Yamada rise to the group's highest tier as she defeats Manami Toyota for the All Pacific Title.

12/6, Sumo Hall: A sellout crowd of 11,500 sees

Aja Kong beat FMW's Megumi Kudo.

12/10, Tokyo, Korakuen: Hokuto & Toyota defeat Inoue & Yamada to win the tag tournament.

1993'S #2 PROMOTION IN JAPAN NEW JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (1991: #2; 1992: #2)

Pro wrestling is a business and the highest goal of all businesses is to make the maximum amount of profit possible. In 1993, Inoki's group also embraced a former enemy and joined the new mood of cooperation among promotions. New Japan and WAR (Wrestle and Romance) teamed up for an endless series of big cards filled with bouts matching up workers from both groups. The financial rewards were astounding.

New Japan simply had its most profitable year since the era when Saturo Sayama flew in tiger stripes as "Tiger Mask." Examine the list of largest Japanese crowds and it is easy to see how New Japan leads the list and accounts for some of the most impressive crowds of the year. And when you look at WAR's major successes, they had New Japan's crew of workers to thank for each of them.

This string of big crowds translated into major dollars for New Japan. Along the way, there were several notable occurrences. They had the two Dome shows, Jan. 4 in Tokyo and May 3 in Fujioka. Together they drew 118,500 fans and the kind of gates that just a few years ago would have seemed impossible. In August, they booked Sumo Hall for seven straight nights causing some experts to question their wisdom. Of the 80,500 possible tickets, the group sold 76,700 or a 95 percent capacity ratio.

In addition, New Japan held nine other big shows scattered throughout the year at which they sold 115,000 tickets for an average of 12,600 per show. Ticket prices for most of these spectacles ranged from a low of \$25 up to \$200 or more for ringside seats. In August, they held a show at a hotel ballroom in Tokyo, sold 700 tickets at \$300 each and walked away with \$210,000.

If money were the sole requisite to being considered the best promotion, New Japan would be number one. Wrestling, after all, is a business. But wrestling should be judged on athleticism and entertainment value.

At no time during the year was the promotion consistently good. The closest they came were many excellent matches during the "Top of the Super Junior Tournament." But even then, the remainder of those cards ranged from poor to mediocre with a preponderance of tag team matches which meant nothing to anyone.

When the spotlight shined on them the brightest, they seemed to shrink rather than rise to the occasion. Too often their key group of better workers—Muto, Chono, and Hase—were relegated to large and meaningless tag bouts while aging veterans looked for a possible last

star turn. Their big G-1 Climax tournament at Sumo Hall sounded promising when they announced in June it would feature seven of their best workers and an eighth "mystery opponent" to be named later in a seven night round-robin tournament. That jump-started ticket sales, but the concept was later shelved in favor of a watered down 16-man single elimination tournament which proved to be a major disappointment. The G-1 Climax cards were such an artistic disaster, that within days the wrestling press was publicly speculating that major changes would have to be implemented if they wanted a 1994 run in Sumo Hall.

And then there is the weekly New Japan TV show. Well, "weekly" may no longer be applicable, since there was only about a 50 percent chance of seeing New Japan on television, since it was often preempted for golf tournaments or other special events. There were stretches of three or four weeks in a row when the group was not on the air. By contrast, All Japan was there each week. When New Japan's show did air, it was often dull and uninteresting. Their best series of bouts—the Junior tournament—was only briefly shown in one minute highlight snippets. Instead, we had tons of the Jurassic Powers, Hell Raisers, Skinheads, Raging Staff, and slower aging veterans.

Profit wasn't enough to consider New Japan the best promotion of the year.

New Japan Timeline

2/5, Sapporo: A sellout crowd of 7,000 sees Kobayashi join with the Skinheads, Fujinami pins The Great Kabuki, and a hot six-man tag has the WAR wrestlers downing the New Japan wrestlers.

2/16, Tokyo Sumo Hall: 11,500 see New Japan beat WAR in a hot ten-man tag bout with Riki Choshu emerging as the hero. Masao Orihara does his full flip moonsault off the turnbuckle to the floor and amazingly lands on his feet.

3/23, Tokyo Gym: 10,669 watch Hiroyoshi Yamamoto beat Osamu Nishimura to win the Lions Cup tournament.

5/3, Fukuoka: Thanks partially to lower ticket prices, New Japan draws 55,000 as Hulk Hogan pins Great Muta and Antonio Inoki & Tatsumi Fujinami beat Riki Chochu & Genichiru Tenryu.

5/26, Omiya: The opening of the "Top of the Super Junior" tournament puts some life into the group. Lightning Kid pins Dave Finlay, Chris Benoit beat Orihara, and Dean Malenko upsets Jushin Liger.

6/12, Chigasaki: Favorite Jushin Liger eliminated from the junior tournament with ankle injury suffered against Too Cold Scorpio.

6/14, Osaka: Benoit wins junior tournament with a top rope powerbomb on El Samurai.

6/29, Tokyo: Antonio Inoki goes public with his answer to charges of tax evasion by Hisashi Shinma. Next day, Inoki's press conference is carried live on all four major Japanese TV networks, denying any wrongdoing.

8/8, Sumo Hall: In the final of seven straight nights at Sumo Hall, Chris Benoit amazes the sellout crowd with a diving headbutt off the top rope on Jushin Liger lying on the arena floor; Benoit eventually lost.

8/29, Tokyo Prince Hotel: 700 people pay \$300

each to see tag matches and a bridal show with Minami Toyota and Takako Inoue.

9/20, Nagoya: Big crowd of 11,500 watches Shinya Hashimoto achieve the dream of his lifetime as he captures the IWGP Title from Great Muta.

9/23, Yokohama: A sellout crowd of 17,000 pack the Ice Arena as Tenryu wins by submission over Hase, plus Hogan & Muta team to defeat The Hell Raisers (Hawk & Kensuke Sasaki) and Black Tiger pins Tiger Mask.

9/26, Osaka Castle: 16,000 watch as Hogan pins Keiji Muto and Chono beats Fujiwara.

11/1, Matsumoto: Hawk tears up his knee in a short victory over Shawn Royal taking the Hell Raisers out of the annual tag team tournament.

11/4, Sumo Hall: A crowd of under 11,000 sees Muto & Hase win the tag tournament over The Jurassic Powers.

12/25, Korakuen: An attempt to run on Christmas flops as only 1,360 attend.

1993'S #3 PROMOTION IN JAPAN ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING (1991: #1; 1992: #1)

Giant Baba's All Japan promotion did not change a thing in 1993 from its basic mode of operation during the previous two years. In 1991 and 1992, it was good enough for the top promotional spot. But while it continued to stand still, All Japan Women and New Japan shifted into a higher and faster gear and surpassed them. Baba's group continued to be highly profitable. It continued to feature the best men's main events seen anywhere in the world. It continued to show these excellent bouts on the weekly TV show, making it the best television show in the business in terms of match quality. It kept its great workers, although Jumbo Tsuruta sat out injured the entire year. Baba even added an extra Budokan Hall show insuring another big payday for the group. But all of that was not enough.

Anyone who seriously follows sports knows that standing pat after you win a title is usually a good way not to repeat again the next season. Pro sports is filled with the teams who fail to fine tune themselves after being the best, and thus are passed by others making changes, such as the 1968 Detroit Tigers. That, too, was the tale of All Japan in 1993.

The money keeps rolling in, match quality remains consistently high, and the core group of key workers seems as good and as healthy as ever. At this point it probably makes little difference if living legend Jumbo Tsuruta ever returns to active duty.

There were ever-increasing signs of fan disinterest with Baba's conservative booking style. Dollar revenue for several months did lag behind previous years. The weekly TV show ratings continued to slide ever downward, bottoming out in the late fall. The puzzle here is the quality of bouts presented on TV had no bearing on the ratings. The Spring Carnival Tournament produced the best series of TV main events any group has produced in the last three years. But the Nippon Network reported no

TOUR ROLL-CALL

Unlike the two major groups in the United States, which run events in a pretty even pattern week to week over the course of a year, most of the major groups in Japan operate for two or three weeks on, then take an equal amount of time off. Each series has a name and is promoted individually with special posters and programs. Special events, such as the finals of the tag team tournaments, are timed to coincide with the last day of these series. The one notable exception to this formula is the All Japan Women promotion which promotes on a U.S. style schedule.

For the record, the following is a listing of each group's tours and the wrestlers who wrestled on each tour who are not based in Japan.

New Japan

2/1-2/16: Fighting Spirit

Imports: Hawk, Tony Halme, Rambo, Brad Armstrong.

3/9-3/23: Hyper Battle

Imports: Scott Norton, Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, Hercules, Axe Boulder.

5/25-6/14: Explosion Tour

Imports: Halme, Bobby Eaton, Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, Eddie Guerrero, Too Cold Scorpio, Lightning Kid, David Finlay.

6/30-7/23: Summer Struggle

Imports: Norton & Hercules, TNT, Hawk, Brad Rheingans.

8/2-8/8: G-1 Climax

Imports: Benoit, Hawk, Guerrero, Haku, Nasty Boys, Norton, Hercules.

All Japan

1/2-1/31: New Giant Series

Imports: Stan Hansen, Johnny Ace, Terry Gordy, Steve Williams, Johnny Smith, Tommy Rogers, Bobby Fulton, Abdullah the Butcher.

2/19-3/4: '93 Excite Series

Imports: Gordy, Williams, Hansen, Spivey, Dory Funk, Doug Furnas, Dan Kroffat, The Patriot (Del Wilkes), The Blackharts.

3/25-4/21: '93 Champion Carnival

Imports: Hansen, Gordy, Williams, Patriot, Spivey, Kroffat, Furnas, Abdullah.

7/2-7/29: Summer Action Series

Imports: Hansen, Gordy, Williams, Patriot, Spivey, Kroffat, Furnas, Abdullah.

8/20-9/9: Summer Action Series II

Imports: Hansen, DiBiase, Williams, Kroffat, Furnas, Abdullah, Patriot, The Eagle, Tracy Smothers.

9/29-10/23: '93 Giant Series

Imports: Hansen, DiBiase, Williams, Big Bosaman, Spivey, Kroffat, Furnas, D. Funk.

11/13-12/3: Real World Tag Team League

Imports: Hansen, DiBiase, Williams, Bossman, Patriot, Eagle, Kroffat, Furnas, Smothers, Spivey Ace, D. Funk, Abdullah, Kamala II.

Frontier Martial Arts

1/5-1/19: U-Jin

Imports: The Original Sheik, Sabu, Titan, Gladiator, Dr. Looser, Hannibal, Haystacks Calhoun.

2/9-2/21: Rekka '93

Imports: Titan, Gladiator, Hannibal, Veritchev.

3/15-3/29: Rekisen No Kuni Nika-ni

Imports: Sheik, Sabu, Judge Dread, Titan.

4/22-5/5

Imports: Titan, Gladiator, Looser, Hannibal, Sabu,

Sheik, Veritchev.

5/30-5/31: Sai Zen Sen x 2

Imports: Titan, Gladiator

6/15-6/28: Bo-Patsu

Imports: Titan, Gladiator, Hannibal, Amigo Ultra.

7/16-8/4: Doh Ran

Imports: Sheik, Sabu, Titan, Gladiator.

8/22-9/4: Shin Geki

Imports: Terry Funk, Sheik, Sabu, Titan, Gladiator.

9/15-9/27: Geki Shin

Imports: Titan, Gladiator, Damian.

10/15-10/28: Kaku Ran

Imports: Titan, Gladiator.

11/19-12/8: All Out War

Imports: Titan, Gladiator, Sabu, Looser, Hannibal, Sheik.

WAR

1/5-1/10: Kaku Mei Rai Doh I

Imports: John Tenta, Haku, Blue Demon Jr., Peirtoth Jr.

2/9-2/14: Kaku Mei Mei Doh

Imports: Tenta, Haku, Chavo Guerrero, Bestia Salvaje.

3/3-3/7: Kaku Mei Destiny

Imports: Tenta, Haku, Dick Slater, Blue Demon.

4/2-4/7: Kaku Mei Sho Bu

Imports: Tenta, Haku, Dick Slater, Blue Demon.

5/20-5/24: Kaku Mei Sho Bu II

Imports: Tenta, Haku, King Iaukea Jr.

7/24-7/29: Kaku Mei Tan Ka

Imports: Tenta, Ricky Morton, Robert Gibson.

8/30-9/12: Winning War

Imports: Tenta, Haku.

10/1-10/11: Warism

Imports: Mil Mascaras, Tenta, Stan Lane.

11/8-11/11: Warism II

Imports: Tommy Rich, King Iaukea Jr.

WING

1/2-1/8: Are You Ready To Get New Blood?

Imports: Jason, Crash the Terminator, Gypsy Joe, Cuban Assassin.

2/3-2/5: Party Is Over

Imports: Leatherface, Jason, Miguel Perez Jr., Crash.

3/16-4/5: Rose Colored Future

Imports: Leatherface, Freddy Kruger, Killer Kyle, Crash, Jason.

5/4-5/9: Danger Road

Imports: Leatherface, Goliath, Head Hunters, Los Cowboys, Perez Jr., Crash.

5/19-5/27: Dog In The Box

Imports: Head Hunters, Jason, Kevin Sullivan, Killer Kyle.

6/10-6/18: World Stage

Imports: Leatherface, Kruger, Jason, Thunderbird Como.

7/4-7/11: Best Champ

Imports: Dick Murdoch, Masked Superstar, Dr. Wagner Jr., Crash, Perez, Jr., Crypt Keeper, Kruger.

8/20-8/31: Hollywood Nightmare

Imports: Crash, Crypt Keeper, Sullivan.

9/25-9/30: Bloody Jack Knife

Imports: Crypt Keeper, Leatherface, Kruger, Head Hunters.

10/19-10/24: Break It Out

Imports: Leatherface, Kruger, El Texano, Silver King.

11/20-11/30: Most Dangerous Tag Wars

Imports: Perez Jr., Head Hunters, Eddie & Doug Gilbert, The Moondogs.

Zavisa's Top 25 Male Wrestlers

1. Kenta Kobashi (All Japan)
2. Toshiaki Kawada (All Japan)
3. Hiroshi Hase (New Japan)
4. Chris Benoit (Pegasus Kid) (New Japan)
5. Jushin Thunder Liger (New Japan)
6. Stan Hansen (All Japan)
7. Mitsuhiro Misawa (All Japan)
8. Sabu (FMW)
9. Nobuhiko Takada (UWF)
10. Tsuyoshi Kikuchi (All Japan)
11. Masa Chono (New Japan)
12. Keiji Muto (New Japan)
13. The Great Sasuke (Michinoku)
14. Dan Kroffat (All Japan)
15. Masas Fuchi (All Japan)
16. Steve Williams (All Japan)
17. El Samurai (New Japan)
18. Jun Akiyama (All Japan)
19. Yoshinari Ogawa (All Japan)
20. Takayuki Iizuka (New Japan)
21. Genichiro Tenryu (WAR)
22. Black Tiger/Eddy Guerrero (New Japan)
23. Akira Nogami (New Japan)
24. Ultimo Dragon (WAR)
25. Shinjuri Otano (New Japan)

Ratings Analysis: Promotions are given points for each wrestler on the list (25 points for #1, 1 point for #25). All Japan has ten ranked wrestlers and 152 points; New Japan has ten ranked wrestlers and 118 points; WAR has two ranked wrestlers for 7 points; FMW, UWF, and Michinoku each have one ranked wrestler.

increase in its ratings for that period. If Baba and the network want to raise ratings significantly, they will be hard-pressed to do so by increasing the workrate or giving people better matches. It is difficult to imagine All Japan's crew working any harder than it did in 1993. Kenta Kobashi is simply the best male wrestler in the world and is not yet at his peak. Stan Hansen had a scrapbook year and the best bouts of his career since his days teaming with Bruiser Brody.

If Baba wants to renew fan interest for TV ratings, he is going to have to part with tradition and dare to do something different. This could range from an alliance with another group in Japan or bringing in some fresh faces by tapping into WCW or even the WWF. Then again, Giant Baba might be satisfied with his group's current situation and go on cashing the still-big checks.

All Japan Timeline

1/2, Tokyo Korakuen: Kenta Kobashi wins the annual New Year's Battle Royal; a brutal chair shot by Stan Hansen on Toshiaki Kawada requires 12 stitches and sets up a major feud.

1/15, Tokyo Korakuen: Guns & Roses watch Taue and Kobashi set up their feud.

3/25, Kyoto: 6,600 watch Steve Williams score a major upset by pinning the legendary Stan Hansen in 21 minutes, plus Misawa pins Kawada in an excellent 22 minute bout.

4/2, Okayama: Toshiaki Kawada gets his first big win over Stan Hansen.

4/12, Osaka: 5,700 pack the hall for the third big

show in three nights as Terry Gordy pins Steve Williams, Kawada fights Taue to a draw, and Misawa pins Kobashi.

4/14, Nagoya: Kawada pins Kobashi in a great four-and-a-half star classic, Gordy upsets Misawa, and Hansen pins Taue.

4/16, Tokyo Korakuen: In the best match of the Carnival tournament, Hansen pins Kobashi.

4/21, Yokohama: Nearly 5,000 see finals of tournament as Hansen pins Misawa, ending the best tournament in years.

5/14, Korakuen: Baba introduces freestyle Olympic wrestler Tamon Honda to crowd.

5/20, Sapporo: Dan Kroffat pins Masa Fuchi to win the PWF Jr. Title and Misawa pins Hansen in another classic.

7/28, Yokohama: 4,900 watch the annual eight-man tag team elimination bout pitting Misawa's team against Kawada's team, lasting 55 minutes.

8/18, Tokyo Narita Airport: Terry Gordy collapses moments after his arrival in Japan and is out of action the rest of 1993.

8/23, Shizuoka: Masa Fuchi pins Dan Kroffat to reclaim the PWF Jr. Title.

8/31, Toyohashi: Williams pins Kobashi in 27:00 and nearly breaks Kobashi's neck with infamous belly-to-back suplexes.

9/3, Tokyo Budokan: Another sellout crowd of 16,300, Ted DiBiase returns to Japan and reforms his team with Stan Hansen and defeats Kawada & Taue to capture the PWF Tag Belts in a mediocre match.

9/9, Omiya: Dan Kroffat & Doug Fumas beat Patriot & Eagle to win the Asian Tag Titles.

11/15, Toda: Ted DiBiase injures his neck and returns to the States as Giant Baba replaces him teaming with Hansen.

12/3, Budokan: Misawa & Kobashi win the Real World Tag Team Tournament in a great match defeating Kawada & Taue.

1993'S #4 PROMOTION IN JAPAN FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS

(1991: #4; 1992: #1)

Once upon a time, Atsushi Onita's blood, sweat, and tears promotion was different, even revolutionary. Now, it is a firm and comfortable fixture in the Japanese pro wrestling establishment. In 1992, it dodged the bullet of complacency and kept fan interest high and dollars rolling in. In 1993, the challenge came from WINGS, which went totally over the line in attempting to outbleed Onita at every opportunity.

WINGS's strategy did not work. Onita tapped his old mentor Terry Funk to replace Tiger Jeet Singh, who went AWOL. Singh had openly argued with Onita over his continual changing of finishes and finally decided to go where he would be more appreciated. Funk showed up for the big May spectacular in Kawasaki before 41,000 and added a new page to his thick book of legendary accomplishments. Funk vs. Onita was a match made in heaven and the fans could not get enough of it. Onita wisely used Funk sparingly and with other workers knowing he would need to save him for a much bigger payday further down the road.

In addition to its big Kawasaki show, it also drew 36,223 on Aug. 22 in Osaka setting a city record for wrestling attendance. Its spot shows

continued to average between 2,000 and 2,500 on most nights with the occasional 4,000 crowd thrown in. Toward the end of the year, Onita reached out to Michinoku Pro and formed a working relationship. As some smaller groups began to fragment, Onita offered jobs to their better workers. The losers seemed to be North American wrestlers such as Sabu, Titan, Gladiator, Dr. Hannibal, and Dr. Looser whose touring schedule was cut significantly back.

The basic formula is still firmly in place—lots of blood, barbed wire, explosives, and carnage. Onita cried his crocodile tears, bled rivers of blood, and played the fans like a fine Stradivarius. FMW celebrated its 5-year anniversary and is in good enough shape, both financially and with its talent, to hold onto its spot for the coming year.

FMW Timeline

1/5, Tokyo Korakuen: A sellout crowd watches Sabu work 90 percent of a bout where he teams with his uncle The Sheik against Onita & Goto.

1/6, Tokyo Korakuen: Goto defeats Onita in an 18 minute no-rope, barbed wire death match, an attempt to out-gore rival WING.

1/12, Osaka: Onita beats Sabu in a barbed wire street fight after which Ricky Fuji and Titan attack both Onita and Sabu.

1/18, Nagoya: Onita pins The Sheik to win his U.S. Title, but then asks him to be his partner against Titan & Fuji.

2/16, Miyazaki: 4,527 watch Onita beat Big Titan in a barbed wire death match.

2/16, Kagoshima: 3,424 watch Onita defeat The Gladiator in a barbed wire death match.

2/17, Fukuoka: After several consecutive nights of barbed wire death matches, Onita checks himself into a local hospital with a high fever.

3/24, Akita: Sheik becomes a babyface after a gang attack by Team Canada.

4/22, Tokyo Korakuen: Sabu begins his war against ringside tables.

5/5, Kawasaki: A record FMW crowd of 41,000 watches Onita defeat his mentor Terry Funk in an emotional 12 minute exploding barbed wire death match.

10/21, Soka: Onita destroys the Great Punk in an empty arena match taking place before the gates open; Punk then shaves his head and comes back under his real name, Katsutoshi Niiyama.

10/31, Tokyo Korakuen: FMW's 5th Anniversary show sells out as Pogo's team beats Onita's team in an eight-man elimination.

12/8, Tokyo: 12,552 watch Onita beat Matsunaga in a brutal exploding land mine match that sends both men to the hospital; Onita needs 65 stitches and Matsunaga stays in traction for a badly injured neck.

12/26, Tokyo, Korakuen: A sellout crowd watches Onita & Goto & Sasuke beat Pogo & Shinzaki & Toi in a no-rope, barbed wire street fight tornado death match.

1993'S #5 PROMOTION IN JAPAN UWF-INTERNATIONAL

(1991: #8; 1992: #5)

Four shows out of the ten largest in Japan in 1993 testify to the resounding success of the

UWF-I. Its three Budokan Hall shows all sold out at over 16,000 seats, and its Dec. 5 Jingu Baseball Stadium show was one of the year's biggest at 46,000 with highly priced seats. The only reason it is not accorded with higher rank is its extremely limited schedule. It put on about one show per month and attempted to convince the fans that since it is "real," the wrestlers need the time to put themselves back together between matches.

While once there were three strong-style promotions, now there are only two, Fujiwara-Gumi folded and Pancrase does not fit the traditional definition of pro wrestling since its finishes are not pre-planned. Takada's UWF-I stands head and shoulders above its only real rival, Akira Maeda's RINGS. Nobuhiko Takada is one of the nation's most popular wrestling figures and is getting the type of mainstream media coverage that Maeda received several years ago.

The addition of Vader to the mix gave UWFI a central focus which helped it build nicely to its December mega-success. Even at \$25,000 a pop, Leon White was a bargain. It is not yet clear, but it looks like the group will be without Vader in 1994. It has a strong group of imports in Gary Albright, Dan Severn, and Dennis Koslowski. Providing it can keep them, UWFI should be in solid shape throughout 1994.

There are two problems to deal with. One is the threat from Pancrase, but that is an external problem and not immediately in its control. The other is what to do with two Japanese stars, Kazuo Yamazaki and Naoki Sano, who have not lived up to their perceived potential thus far.

UWFI Timeline

2/14, Tokyo, Budokan Hall: A sellout of 16,500 watch Nobuhiko Takada defeat Kiyoshi Tamura, plus Vader's signing is announced to the crowd.

4/10, Osaka: Another sellout of 7,500 watches Takada down Yamazaki and Gary Albright KO Dennis Koslowski.

8/13, Budokan: A \$1 million gate is drawn (16,500 fans) as Vader downs Yamazaki without breaking a sweat.

10/4, Osaka: On a special card taped for airing on pay-per-view in the United States, Vader manhandles the much smaller Naoki Sano and Takada beats Billy Scott in a Rocky-themed bout.

1993'S #6 PROMOTION IN JAPAN WRESTLING AND ROMANCE, (WAR) (1991: #6; 1992: #7)

They now call themselves WAR, only because their full title is the worst in the business. In its previous existence, WAR was known as Super World Sports. The group's survival has always depended on a godfather who stayed behind the scenes paying the bills and absorbing the river of red ink from its losses. Its original godfather was Hachiro Tanaka, owner of a large optical company. He kept them afloat for over two years paying the salaries and the bills. But Tanaka

could not pay fans to attend SWS shows, so he got a second godfather to join him—Antonio Inoki of New Japan Pro Wrestling and member of the Japanese Diet. In return for Tanaka's financial and political support, Inoki's wrestlers formed an alliance with WAR. The result was a success for both promotions.

The combined New Japan-WAR cards earned major revenue throughout the year and brought fans to the WAR arenas. The group's badly bruised reputation was slowly reclaimed and by the middle of the year, even the Tokyo hardcores were buying tickets.

WAR is now a viable promotion both at the box office and in the eyes of the fans. Its future outlook seems bright with one possible caveat—if it should lose either of its powerful godfathers, Wrestling and Romance could quickly become just Memories and Nostalgia.

WAR Timeline

2/14, Tokyo: 11,800 watch as Riki Choshu pins Hara and Tenryu & Ishikawa beat Fujinami & Hase setting a pace of success for the rest of the year.

5/20, Inuyama: El Samurai defeats Ultimo Dragon to capture the IWGP Jr. Hvt. Title.

6/17, Tokyo Budokan: Shoit of a sellout, 10,000 watch as Hase pins Fuyuki, Chono beats Kitahara, Muta pins Hara, and Tenryu pins Hashimoto in the best match of the night.

12/15, Sumo Hall: Tenryu's big 30th Anniversary show fails to sell out, but they do draw 10,000 which is considered a success as Tenryu defeats fellow legend Tatsumi Fujinami in the main event.

1993'S #7 PROMOTION IN JAPAN RINGS (1991: #5; 1992: #6)

Akira Maeda is the skeleton that supports the body of RINGS. In 1993, the group watched as Maeda sat on the sidelines for many months after reconstructive surgery early in the year. During those long months, the group shifted its focus around a variety of imports. Without Maeda, it drew some impressive numbers, including 8,700 on May 28, 6,380 on July 13, and 11,500 on Aug. 21. Meanwhile, the RINGS hardcores remained faithful and patiently awaited their hero's return. Maeda did come back on Oct. 23 before 7,526 in Fukuoka for the beginning of its annual Battle Dimension Tournament. It had dodged one major bullet.

But now, even with Maeda, it faces yet another major bullet. This time, its name is Pancrase and it threatens to strip Maeda of his most rabid followers. The last few years proved that the fans could not support more than two strong-style promotions. The UWFI thrives, RINGS survives, and Fujiwara-Gumi is history. The persona of Maeda and RINGS is built around the cult image of the rebel. That was fine when Maeda was the young and cocky kid with a real grudge against the world of pro wrestling, but Maeda is now approaching middle age and the James Dean leather jacket looks oddly out of place.

Pancrase, which appears to involve real

shooting, takes rebellion much further than Maeda ever did. The young shooting maniacs who once flocked to Maeda could well spurn him as an aging has-been in favor of Funaki, Suzuki, and the other Pancrase hybrids. Takada and his UWFI seem well-established enough to survive that onslaught. In 1994, Maeda faces a test of perceived credibility and longevity.

RINGS Timeline

1/23, Tokyo Bay NK Hall: 6,570 watch as Chris Doleman defeats Dirk Vrij to win the tournament finals and Akira Maeda defeats Herman Renting to finish third.

2/28, Tokyo Korakuen: Even without Maeda on the card, the building sells out in less than one hour to watch what turns out to be a mediocre show.

4/30, Tokyo Korakuen: A sign of falling fortunes for the group, only 1,780 tickets are sold to see a card without Maeda.

5/29, Tokyo: A large crowd of 8,700 shows they can draw without Maeda, although the bout lacked any power or flair.

7/13, Osaka: Still without Maeda, they draw 6,380 as Dirk Vrij beats Volk Han in the main event.

8/21, Yokohama: 11,500 watch as Volk Han beats Chris Dolman and Willy Williams beats Dick Vrij; still no Maeda, but a good crowd.

10/23, Fukuoka: The Battle Dimension Tournament begins with 7,526 turning out to see the return of Akira Maeda who defeats Sotir Gotchev in a flat, lackluster match.

11/18, Sumo Hall: The effects of Pancrase begin to be felt as Maeda fails to sellout drawing under 9,000 for his victory over Herman Renting.

12/25, Niigata: Maeda draws more than New Japan on Christmas day with 3,435 watching as he defeats Mitsuya Nagai.

Top 25 Crowds of the Year

1. 1/4 New Japan, Tokyo Dome, 63,500*
2. 5/3 New Japan, Fukuoka Dome, 55,000
3. 12/5 UWFI, Tokyo, 46,187*
4. 5/5 FMW, Kawasaki, 41,000
5. 8/22 FMW, Osaka, 36,223*
6. 9/23 New Japan, Yokohama, 17,000*
7. 2/14 UWFI, Budokan, 16,500*
7. 4/2 AJW, Yokohama, 16,500*
7. 5/6 UWFI, Budokan, 16,500*
7. 8/13 UWFI, Budokan, 16,500*
11. 2/28 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
11. 6/1 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
11. 7/29 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
11. 9/3 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
11. 10/23 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
11. 12/3 All Japan, Budokan, 16,300*
17. 9/26 New Japan, Osaka, 16,000*
18. 8/25 AJW, Budokan, 14,500
19. 6/15 New Japan, Budokan, 14,214
20. 6/15 FMW, Tokyo, 21,552
21. 7/24 FMW, Fukuoka, 12,030
22. 3/21 New Japan, Nagayo, 12,000
23. 2/14 WAR, Tokyo, 11,800
24. There were nine Tokyo Sumo Hall shows that had crowds of 11,500. Seven were from New Japan, one from Rings, and one from AJW. All were sellouts.

* denotes sellout crowd

Zavisa's Top 25 Female Wrestlers

1. Manami Toyota (All Japan Women)
2. Akira Hokuto (AJW)
3. Kyoko Inoue (AJW)
4. Devil Masami (JWP)
5. Toshiyo Yamada (AJW)
6. Bull Nakano (AJW)
7. Mayumi Ozaki (JWP)
8. Sakie Hasegawa (AJW)
9. Hikari Fukuoka (JWP)
10. Suzuka Minami (AJW)
11. Takako Inoue (AJW)
12. Dynamite Kansai (JWP)
13. Mima Shimoda (AJW)
14. Rumi Kazama (LLPW)
15. Yumiko Hotta (AJW)
16. Aja Kong (AJW)
17. Harley Saito (LLPW)
18. Etsuko Mita (AJW)
19. Plum Mariko (JWP)
20. Kauro Ito (AJW)
21. Shinobu Kandori (LLPW)
22. Borshei Kid (JWP)
23. Cutie Suzuki (JWP)
24. Chaparita Asari (AJW)
25. Miki Handa (LLPW)

Ratings Analysis: AJW has fourteen ranked wrestlers for 212 pts.; JWP has seven ranked wrestlers for 86 pts.; LLPW has four ranked wrestlers for 27 pts.

1993'S #8 PROMOTION IN JAPAN JAPANESE WOMEN'S PROMOTION (1991: #10; 1992: #10)

Perhaps the neediest beneficiary of the new mood of cooperation among wrestling promotions was JWP, usually known simply as "the other women's group." It was only the previous year that the promotion was closed for three months and nearly went out of business permanently. Late in 1992, JWP started trading talent with the larger All Japan Women promotion and kicked those same exchanges into high gear for all of 1993. JWP was rewarded in many ways, ranging from increased revenues to new interest in many of its wrestlers. Its Nov. 18 card in Yokohama was one of the year's best, exceeded only by DreamSlam I & II.

The attention it received on AJW supercards helped Kansai, Ozaki, Fujioka, and Masami reach a science. The experience of working with the AJW wrestlers made them better workers. The group is in a greatly improved position from just 12 months ago.

JWP Timeline

1/15, Tokyo Korakuen: In a sign of things to come for the rest of the year, a sellout crowd watches an interpromotional match-up as JWP stars Dynamite Kansai & Mayumi Ozaki defeat AJW's Yumiko Hotta & Takako Inoue in 30:00.

3/21, Tokyo Korakuen: Devil Masami & Dynamite Kansai defeat Mayumi Ozaki & Cutie Suzuki in 29:16 to capture the tag belts.

7/31, Yokohama: A crowd of nearly 5,000 watches a team of four JWP wrestlers headed by Dynamite Kansai defeat an AJW team headed by Aja Kong in a

marathon five fall, 60 minute match.

11/18, Yokohama: A crowd of 5,200 sees one of the year's best inter-promotional events.

1993'S #9 PROMOTION IN JAPAN WING (1992: #9; 1992: #11)

Another group that dodged a bullet was WING. They have fought to stay in business for the last 24 months and are still alive and kicking. That is no small accomplishment considering they lost their two biggest stars Mr. Pogo and Mitsuhiro Matsunaga to FMW.

They have attempted to replace Matsunaga with a variety of youngsters including Kanemura who was sliced, diced, and broiled on their bigger cards. WING seems to thrive in direct proportion to the lengths that their workers are willing to push the envelope. How many youngsters in Japan are willing to dive out of a 22 foot high balcony to get beaten with a barbed wire wrapped baseball bat or be turned into a human torch? The answer to that question may determine the group's prospect of survival.

WING Timeline

1/2, Tokyo Korakuen Hall: Mr. Pogo unmasks Jason of his hockey mask to reveal Tracy Smothers.

1/7, Tokyo Korakuen: Gypsy Joe wrestles in his final match.

2/5, Tokyo Korakuen: Itakura defeats Motegi to win the WWC World Jr. Title.

3/20, Okazaki: Robert Rodrigues returns from a three month ban as Jason and teams with Matsunaga to defeat Freddy Kruger & Leatherface in a barbed wire cage match in front of 4,838.

3/30, Hakata: Leatherface & Kruger win the tag belts from Matsunaga & Terminator, plus Pogo no-shows again as the crowds begin to dwindle.

4/3, Kagoshima: Matsunaga & Kanemura defeat Leatherface & Kruger to capture the WING tag belts using a baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire to choke Kruger.

5/5, Odawara: 5,659 watch Matsunaga defeat Leatherface in a bed of nails death match as Leatherface hits the spikes and is stretched out.

5/9, Honjoh: The Headhunters defeat Perez Jr. & Kanemura in the tournament finals to win the tag titles, plus El Texano beats Motegi for the WWC Jr. Title.

5/19, Kanazawa: Thunderbird Como debuts and wows the crowd with his Liger-like show.

7/11, Yokohama: 4,728 see Crash the Terminator defeat Goliath in one of the year's worst bouts to win the WING Hvt. Title tournament.

10/31, Odawara: Jado & Gedo beat Kanemura & Nakamaki in a ring of fire death match ending when Kanemura is powerbombed into fire and suffers serious burns on his back.

11/26, Kawasaki: Eddie & Doug Gilbert throw off their monster masks and criticize WING and its president and pledge their undying loyalty to Giant Baba and All Japan Wrestling—very odd, since the brothers do not have a job or the promise of one with Baba's group.

11/30, Osaka: Jado & Gedo beat Headhunters to win the WING Tag Tournament.

12/23, Tokyo Korakuen: One of the worst Korakuen crowds ever—600 fans—watches a weak show as most fans are out shopping.

1993'S #10 PROMOTION IN JAPAN LLPW (not previously ranked)

Rumi Kazama's promotion has gone from complete obscurity to reasonable viability. They are the recipient of increased fan attention by virtue of appearing on cards with the All Japan Women and JWP. They had several Korakuen sellouts and a few larger shows in the 4,000-range as well.

Kazama proved to be a pretty competent worker who could hold her own against Akira Hokuto, and Shinobu Kandori has cultivated a reputation as a lethal powerhouse. They are even attempting to develop Yasha Kurenai into something of an attraction. For a Japanese woman, Tasha has the distinct advantage of fairly decent anatomical development. She is what my mother used to call "a healthy girl."

As long as LLPW continues to work with the two larger groups they should be able to survive. They round out a trio of women's promotions in the top ten making 1993 the best year ever for women's wrestling.

LLPW Timeline

1/4, Korakuen: A standing room only crowd watches Shinobu Kandori outlasts Kitamura, Saito, Nagashima, Futagami, and Handa in a 45 minute, 5 women challenge series.

8/29, LLPW, Tokyo Korakuen: Kandori defeats Eagle Sawai before 2,300 to become the first LLPW Champion.

11/9, Tokyo Gym: One of the group's largest crowds—4,500—shows up for their Anniversary show with LLPW vs. AJW wrestlers.

Timeline Notebook

1/7, Sabae (NOW): 26-year-old Toshimitsu Naoi loses to Hiroshi Hatakana and dies the next day in a truck accident.

2/13, Nagayo (Pro Crusaders): The Takano Brothers' promotion opens for business with a flat, lackluster card.

3/16, Yahbacho (Michinoku): The new group debuts to a healthy crowd of 1,920 in the northern provinces. Dolphin unmasks Sasuke to establish their feud as the backbone of the promotion.

5/15, Tokyo: Chigusa Nagayo's semi-autobiographical motion picture "Ring, Ring, Ring" opens to lukewarm business and dies a quick death within two weeks.

5/15, Tokyo (Pancrase): Masakatsu Funaki holds a press conference announcing the formation of a new strong-style group promising to hold real athletic contests.

7/24, Morioka (Michinoku): One of the year's best bouts sees Sasuke pin Dolphin to win the UWA Title.

8/15, Tokyo Korakuen (Oriental): Their 1st Anniversary show has Itakura & Araya beating Takasugi & Tsurumi to win a one-night tag toumey.

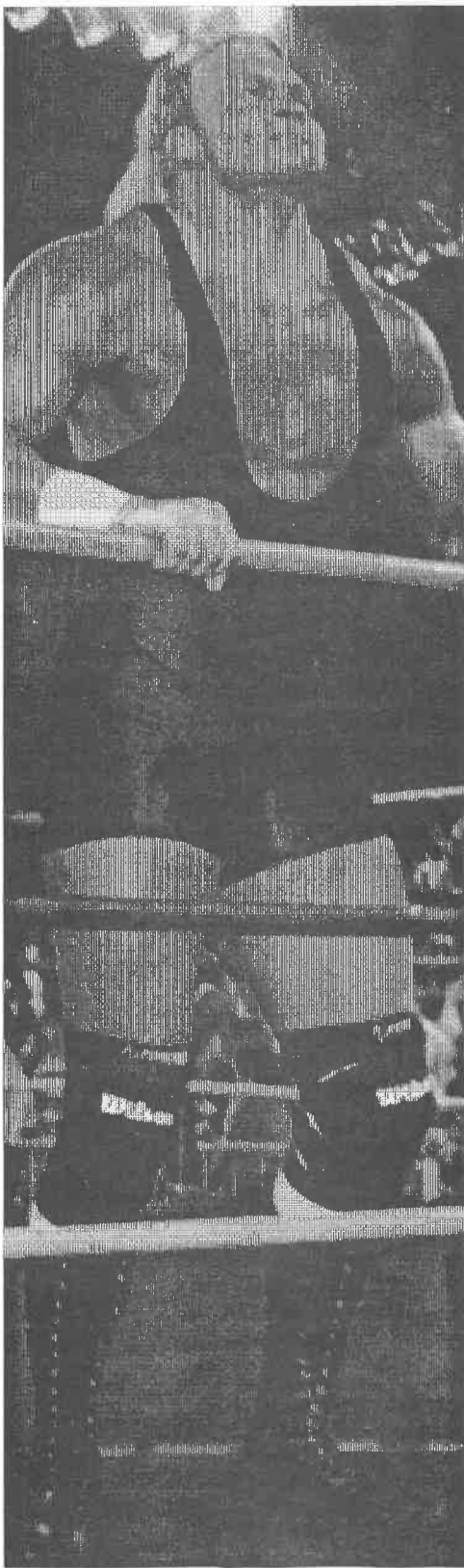
9/21, Tokyo Bay NK Hall (Pancrase): A crowd of 7,000 sits in shock as five bouts feature a total of 13 minutes of action. Wayne Shamrock defeats Masa Funaki in the main event.

11/27, Tokyo Bay NK Hall (Kick Boxing): Pancrase's Masa Funaki KO's Maurice Smith in just 1:50 and a big crowd of 7,450 keeps the Pancrase momentum rolling.

Who's Better...

By MARK MADDEN

SID VICIOUS or ULTIMATE WARRIOR



Note: Many of you have no doubt noted the commercial tone of Torch columnist Mark Madden's work since he took a job working for the Real Wrestling Hotline in 1993. Or, maybe you haven't, since most of it is subliminal. For example, did you know that if you look at only the first letter of every paragraph in Madden's stirring j'accuse of Sid Vicious (Torch #251), it spells out C-A-L-L-T-H-E-R-E-A-L-W-R-E-S-T-L-N-G-H-O-T-L-I-N-E-O-N-S-U-N-D-A-Y-A-N-D-L-E-A-V-E-T-H-E-P-H-O-N-E-O-F-F-T-H-E-H-O-O-K-F-O-R-T-H-E-D-A-Y? Didn't think so. It might explain some of your phone bills.

Madden, it seems, has been afflicted with a case of the greeds, something hardly indigenous to those involved with wrestling, but certainly a common affliction to those who are. In fact, late last year, Madden put together a proposal for a mainstream wrestling magazine, a magazine which would have been sort of a wrestling version of Heavy Metal mag Hit Parader which, in its glory days, often published close comparisons of popular bands, then offering a conclusion as to which one was "better." Madden was hoping to target the teen audience with his magazine, taking advantage of the lack of such a product as well as of the fact that he's never really grown up.

The magazine proposal was rejected by everyone, even Real Wrestling Hotline promoter, Jim Herd. "Sillier than the Ding Dongs," said he.

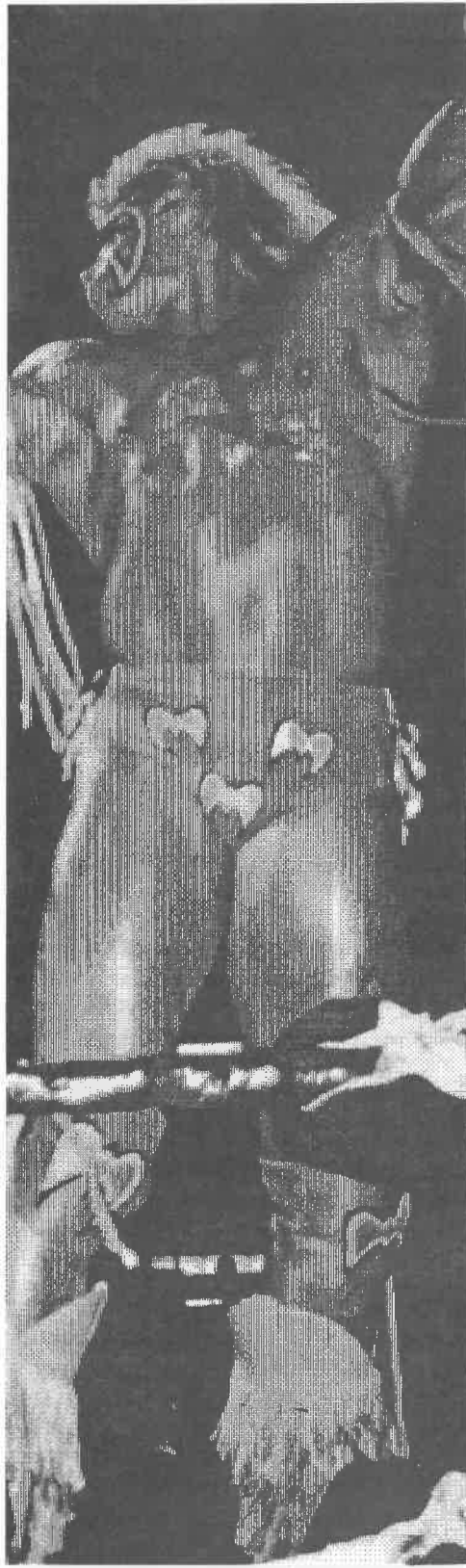
A copy of Madden's lead story for the first issue of his proposed magazine has been made available to the Torch, however. It is printed herewith.

We are sure you will find it is stupid, crass, juvenile, idiotic, lame-brained, and without foundation in journalism. If enough of you like it, however, let us know. Maybe we can talk Madden into doing it again.

For the right price, of course.

WHO'S BETTER: ULTIMATE WARRIOR OR SID VICIOUS?

America, my friends, is absolutely obsessed with being no. 1. The wrestling product is no exception, although most times it smells like no. 2. At any rate, the wrestling boom brought upon us a generation of men who were willing to inject whatever was necessary into their bodies to rise to the top of the pro grappling profession, men who were willing to sacrifice their hip sockets and testes and brain cells—not to mention their athleticism and working ability—in order to get over and, in between softball



games and, if you believe tabloid stories, maybe even a male prostitution foray here and there—make the proverbial lot o' dough.

Why? Well, why is anybody's guess, but the fact remains you gotta be THE Greatest, not just another guy that tried. If you're merely the Intercontinental Champion as the Royal Rumble of life slices its time intervals lower than those shown on the scoreboard clock, you might as well get back—bodydropped into the air and not come down.

Two men, in retrospect, did more than any others to become the best and the brightest, the king o' the hill, the hottest weenie in the campfire: Jim "Ultimate Warrior" Hellwig and Sid "Sid Vicious" Eudy.

Sid Vicious's pinking shears have cut a strange pattern on the fabric of life, to say nothing of the patterns they carved on Arn Anderson's body. After debuting under a hockey mask as Lord Humongous in Alabama—his best job to date, because his softball league was within driving distance on a nightly basis, rumor has it—Sid adopted the name and intelligence but, unfortunately, not the breathing rate of a dead English punk rock star to make his bid for fame and fortune. Some say Sid gives the people what they want. Unfortunately, those people never seem to show up when Sid wrestles.

Speaking of showing up, Ultimate Warrior's brain seems to arrive about two days after his body in most cases. Like Sid, he swings from both sides of the dish, only Sid does it on a softball field, Warrior for an agreed-upon price at the Motel 6 of your choice. You know how, when there's a horrible sex murder, the cops round up all known sex offenders and grill 'em? Ultimate Warrior leaves these same people complimentary tickets. Anyway, he went from job boy for the Von Erichs—in about 50 years he'll be sitting in a big chair with a glass of sherry, saying, "I outlived them all"... or maybe that'll be in 50 minutes—to being the undisputed WWF World Champion for about a week. Talk about upward mobility... actually, if you talk about upward mobility with Ultimate Warrior, I believe that'll cost extra.

So it's hardly surprising that these two are duking it out to see who's the hottest steak in the pro wrestling meatpile. And let's be thankful. If the dozen or so slimebuckets who idolize these two weren't glued to their TVs either watching them or waiting for their returns, they might be off somewhere doing some damage, maybe beating up lugers—sled riders, not Lex—in Germany, trying to push Dave Meltzer in front of an earthquake in California, or wanting to finish the job by going after Bruiser Brody's wife and kid. So you can't say that Sid and Warrior are without a purpose, without a value.

Without talent? Don't be picky.

I hear the question on your quivering lips: who's the greatest? Not who's sold the most

tickets, not who's generated the best pay-per-view buyrates, not who's come up with the bests TV ratings, not who's had the most four-star matches, not who's stayed in one company for more than half-an-hour or until the balloon payment check cleared, not who's encouraged more girls and boys to be uust like them at any cost. It's the intangible rating of who's the coolest, hottest, boogie downingest, f—in' A—est and bestarino.

This topic is bigger than life and the combined pharmacy bill of the two, and must be dealt with now, before people actually trade tapes of the pair. So we're putting Sid and Warrior under the Madden—o—scope, category by category, and letting genius and common sense decide who is el numero uno grande.

May God have mercy on our souls.

SPEAKING ABILITY

"I eat the toxins other men fear," Ultimate Warrior once said. Warrior's interviews have made so little sense over the years that it's really hard to rate him. Highlights include being buried in sand up to his neck by Jake Roberts, having ooze dripping all over him thanks to Papa Shango (perhaps a familiar sensation for Warrior), talking to his hands and grimacing with his mouth open as wide as it can go (fill in your own cheap shot here). Notice that at no other time did Warrior's interviews make use of his speaking ability.

Sid, on the other hand, has two clear-cut career highlights: he failed to crack up when "Shockmaster" Fred Ottman fell on his face during his live TV debut as the Shockmaster on a WCW Clash, and he was once cast in a role, Lord Humongous, which not only encouraged him to shut his mouth, it was required! Bonus credit goes to Sid for his days as a babyface in the WWF in which he pulled off the Huckleberry Finn—style interview quite well.

Advantage: Sid Vicious.

APPEARANCE

The fact that this comparison is even being written says it all, gang: it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that syringe. Problem is, it's a tough call. Starting with Ultimate Warrior, he has that cro-magnon man forehead, inhuman-sized biceps and thighs, and pecs you could nurse the Partridge Family with, er, starting to get the point? You can almost hear their hips disintegrate. The big difference is, Sid's hair looks almost lifelike, as does his skin. Warrior's hair looks like an endangered species preserve, his makeup most days looks like it was applied by Hawk's cosmetologist while she was sitting on his face, and the last time anyone saw skin tone like that, they were sifting through the rubble at Hiroshima and trying to pick up Bull Nakano's grandmother. But it's pretty much a tie.

So, we gotta go to ring attire. Sid has usually come to the ring in leather chaps and a vest, looking like Wyatt Earp if he's taken enough winstrol to inflate himself into the world's biggest ass—-. In the latter days of his tenure, Warrior had taken to wearing a bodysuit that featured fake, painted-on—muscles. Warrior had talent for wearing a bodysuit that featured fake, painted-on—muscles but no testicles. If you've seen him lately, he looks like he should be on the cover of this month's *BlueBoy*, assuming he isn't.

Advantage: Ultimate Warrior for truth in packaging.

REAL-LIFE TOUGHNESS

When ya get right down to it, it doesn't matter who gets his hand raised after the 1-2-3, or even who the second guy is who gets his hand raised after the 1-2-3 if Dusty Rhodes is booking. It's who can KICK BUTT when the cameras aren't rolling, who can jump guys from behind in the bathroom, who can paste jobbers in the face the hardest knowing that the jobber won't retaliate in fear of losing his \$35 paycheck and open soda bar privileges backstage.

Ultimate Warrior is sort of a tough case study, being as how his career basically started with having his face shoved into toilets by Dick Slater after his attempt to hit on Slater's wench o' the week, Dark Journey, went awry. It was sort of ill-advised in the first place, because anyone who's seen Dark Journey knows there's no light at the end of that tunnel. Since then, there's really no record of Ultimate Warrior testing his masculinity—hee, hee—although his lack of a long jobber mistreatment record can probably be chalked up to not really knowing what he's doing out there. But as far as bein' TUFF, geez, Warrior had best heed Grandpa Munster's advice to the marginally masculine: "It's either pray for rain or learn not to pitch underhand!"

Sid, on the other hand, has gone way, way back to the well to make good in this category, right from his debut in WCW when he threw a jobber into the stands at his first TV taping, causing a lacerated something—or—other. Speaking for myself, I'd be willing to sustain a lacerated almost—anything if someone was willing to throw me closer to the exit while Sid was wrestling. Since then, Sid has proven he's a real man time after time, whether it's by going after Brian Pillman and Mike Graham with a squeegee (many present, given Sid's intellect, thought a gas station attendant had run amok on that one) and getting his ass kicked, or whether it's by going after Arn Anderson with a chair leg while Arn was half-asleep and still more or less getting his ass kicked, and fired, too. Truth be told, if Sid Vicious was in an ass-kicking contest, he'd be rated a longer shot than the one-legged guy.

Advantage: Stu Hart.

INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT

If these two were even a little more life-like and a bit more well-spoken, they could have beaten Beavis and Butt-head to the punch and become America's most beloved cartoon morons. Don't forget, pro wrestling is a caricature of real life, and Ultimate Warrior and Sid Vicious are caricatures of wrestling, just like this is a caricature of actual journalism.

Again, Warrior has done nothing to distinguish himself in this category, aside from grimacing a lot. He did, however, let the simplest of self-evident truths sink into his skull when he saw that the WWF was actually going to test for steroids and, not trusting his masking skills, split for good.

Sid, however, has behaved idiotically at almost every turn. Let's look at some of his crowning achievements. While at WCW, Sid yelled out spots at the top of his lungs during a pay-per-view. He walked out on a \$500,000-a-year contract at WCW to go to the WWF, actually believing Vince McMahon when he said he would pay him similarly. He got caught substituting Harvey Whippleman's urine, which he had in a Visine bottle, for his own during a steroid test. Talk about looking out for no. 1, huh? If you think THAT was embarrassing, think about what happened later when a forgetful Sid got something in his eye. Then, at Royal Rumble '92, Sid managed to turn Hulk Hogan heel and himself tough-guy babyface even though neither was supposed to happen. It took the WWF's crack TV crew a good 20 minutes of post-production to splice in enough boos to lead the lemmings back down the proper trail, at least on video. Then he wouldn't sell for Hulk at Wrestlemania IX, screwing up the finish in the process. That evidence suggests this guy is a complete and total imbecile, which explains how he's gone so far in this biz.

Advantage: Ultimate Warrior.

ATHLETIC ABILITY

The beauty of the steroid age is that it has given magnificent muscles to clumsy men who have no idea as to how to use them. 'Nuff said. It makes no sense to compare the wrestling repertoires of the two, since they have none. Sid, with the powerbomb, has a slight advantage, but frankly that move doesn't impress me unless some Japanese announcer says, "abba dabba abba dabba abba dabba POWER BOOOOOMB!" while I'm watching and, frankly I doubt that any self-respecting Japanese wrestling announcer could do that for one of Sid's powerbombs without laughing, or whatever it is they do to express humorous emotions without losing face and having to fall on a sword. Ultimate Warrior, on the other hand, at least exerts some energy. Trouble is, he does it while he's running to the ring, and he's out of

gas after that.

Thusly, we have to go to the tie-breaker, namely outside-the-ring athletic ability. To my knowledge, Warrior has never competed at any other sport that didn't involve someone buying him a drink first. Sid, on the other hand, plays that all-American sport, softball, the game that requires an "athlete" to focus his eyes on a nearly inanimate object, then try to hit it past 10 drunks. The fact that anyone plays the sport is incredible, the fact that anyone takes it as seriously as Sid apparently does is neurotic. I mean, there's no way for a guy to make a living battering a nearly inanimate object with a club-like instrument unless he works for the Los Angeles Police Department or knows Tonya Harding. At any rate, I offer you this softball paradox that sums up the sporting character of Sid Vicious: When he wrestles, he fakes injuries to free himself up for softball but, when he plays softball, he's the designated hitter so as to minimize his chances of getting hurt badly enough to have to miss wrestling. Hopefully, he'll slide into a multi-car pile-up up one of these days which might just knock some sense into him.

Advantage: Ultimate Warrior.

CHARACTER

I realize the word "character" should never be used in a pro wrestling story unless it's preceded by the word "cartoon." But since no one can be trusted in pro wrestling, it's sort of fun to try to figure out which guy has the least character. Don't forget, these guys were played off each other back at SummerSlam '91 and, in the end, Sid took Warrior's place in the post-main event posedown with Hulk Hogan when Warrior got thrown out on his bodysuit for trying to hold Vince up for (gasp, shock, horror) guaranteed moolah. Sid and Warrior may have even passed each other in the parking lot. I can't award any advantage for this escapade, since Warrior was unhesitant in trying to hold Vince up and Sid was equally eager to take Warrior's parking space in the main event lot. So how best to separate these two in the character department?

Looking at Warrior, well, he may not have stolen anyone's wife, but a tabloid has intimated that he may have stolen someone's husband. Otherwise, he seems okay for a guy who looks like a musclebound reject from a Missing Persons swish-alike contest. He tried to screw indie promoters by charging a jillion dollars (ring name extra) per appearance, but we should all applaud that. And, in perhaps the most humane and charitable act ever performed by anyone within the wrestling business, Ultimate Warrior not only left the public eye when the WWF ditched him for good in 1992, but he's stayed out ever since, and kept quiet, too. Headlock on Hunger be damned, I think we all owe Ultimate Warrior a big thankee for that, and

I personally would like to shake his hand as long as I were wearing gloves and a surgical mask.

Sid, on the other hand, has done the impossible. He has committed so many acts displaying an absolutely nonsensical or despicable moral or character that HE CAN'T GET A JOB IN THE WRESTLING BUSINESS!!!! Not only that, but he's friends with Jim Ross. Here's a list of people who, incredibly, would find it easier to get a job in wrestling than Sid or, more incredibly, have jobs in wrestling.

1. Pat Patterson (WWF booker, accused sex offender)
 2. Vince McMahon (WWF owner, accused sex offender, indicted on drug pushing)
 3. Mel Phillips (ex-WWF ring announcer, accused sex offender)
 4. Terry Garvin (ex-WWF executive, accused sex offender)
 5. Jerry Lawler (ex-WWF wrestler, accused sex offender)
 6. Hulk Hogan (ex-WWF wrestler, accused drug abuser)
 7. Randy Savage (WWF wrestler/announcer, on camera woman abuser, etc.)
 8. Tom Cole (WWF ringboy, alleged sex offeree—and he just keeps coming back for more, don't he?)
 9. Jimmy Snuka (ex-WWF wrestler, and according to *Penthouse* article, rumored murderer)
 10. Bruno Sammartino (ex-WWF wrestler, stood idly by while his children, the flash of his flesh, abused steroids et al—some father, huh?)
 11. Ken Patera (ex-WWF wrestler, convicted felon, irate McDonald's customer)
 12. Masa Saito (ex-WWF wrestlers, see Ken Patera)
 13. Kerry Von Erich (ex-WWF wrestler, convicted felon, dead)
 - 14 & 15. Jim Duggan and Iron Sheik (ex-WWF wrestlers, caught with drugs and, worse yet, committing kayfabe violations)
 16. Blackjack Mulligan (ex-WWF wrestler, convicted counterfeiter)
 17. John Wayne Gacy (first choice to co-host WWF Mania due to exemplary work with teens in the past, turned down due to prior commitment)
- Advantage: Ultimate Warrior

THE DECISION

Who's the greatest pro wrestler on the face of the planet Earth? Lex Luger, of course. What a stupid question.

(The author would like to thank Rick Johnson, formerly of *Creem*, *America's Only Rock 'n' Roll Magazine*, for inspiration for this article and for not suing him for plagiarism. He pledges to buy Rick a snow-cone to sit on at the earliest available opportunity, assuming Rick's still alive.)

TORCH TALK SPECIAL



TED DIBIASE

By Wade Keller

Ted DiBiase, born Jan. 18, 1954, began his wrestling career in 1975, six years after his father "Iron" Mike DiBiase died during a match in Texas. Since then, DiBiase has become one of the most respected wrestlers in the world. He spent the first 10 years of his career in NWA regional promotions and touring Japan. He gained most of his mainstream fame in the last 8 years working for the WWF as the "Million Dollar Man." He was rated no. 2 in the world on the respected Wrestling Observer "Top 75" list in 1986. In last year's Pro Wrestling Torch "Top 75" list, he was rated no. 41. Last summer he decided to leave the WWF in favor of returning to All Japan, citing simply wanting "a change of pace" as his reason. Soon, however, an injury put him out of action indefinitely. In the following in-depth "Torch Talk Special," conducted Feb. 11, 1994, DiBiase talks about his career, his future, and his thoughts on the current state of the wrestling industry.

Keller: Do you remember the first time as a kid you realized the unique occupation of your father, that not every dad travelled around the country?

DiBiase: I can't pinpoint a specific time. For one thing, I might add that's unique about my situation being raised by a father who was a wrestler, is that my father—and I call him my father, I don't call him my step-father, which in actuality he was—raised me from the time I was about 4 years old to his death when I was 15. But he was the father that I knew. He married my

mother. This, some people know and some people don't know, my mother as well was a lady wrestler. She wrestled as Helen Hild. She was a showgirl before that. She did choreographic-type stage-dancing. She was a lady wrestler the first time around when to be a lady wrestler was a very glamorous thing, like the first heyday of wrestling. That's how she met my dad. She had divorced my biological father when I was two.

Keller: And you didn't know your biological father after that?

DiBiase: He came to see me a few times. What he actually did was once my mother remarried and established a home, more or less, with Mike DiBiase, I got Christmas gifts and birthday gifts and letters occasionally, and he let me go on and have a normal life. As normal a life as I could have being raised by wrestlers. But my biological father was a singer, so the entertainment business is in my blood biologically and otherwise.

Keller: Did the singing voice carry over?

DiBiase: Okay, I can't sing at all. But the reason I have the voice I have, and one of the reasons I've been encouraged throughout my wrestling career to pursue broadcasting and voice overs is because of the voice that my father gave me. My father has a very beautiful deep base voice. That's where it came from.

At any rate, Mike DiBiase raised me from the time I was about four years old. That's really about the time you start to remember things anyway, at least for me.

Keller: As you were travelling on the road with your family, did you feel lucky to be the son of a famous wrestler? Did you think that made you special?

DiBiase: I didn't consider myself special, but I knew I was different. It didn't take me long in the early years at age 5, 6, 7 to realize that everybody else's dad goes to work and works in stores as a salesman or whatever, and my dad's on television. My dad's a wrestler. The thing about my whole relationship with my dad and the wrestling that made it unique, that made it different, that made it special, was my relationship with him. He treated me very well. He treated me as his very own. That's the way he felt about me. The wrestling was downplayed. The fact that that's what he did for a living, that was his job. That was what he did. He wanted me to respect that, but the truth as I grew older, the business was very, very protected back then in terms of as I grew up as a child, I believed. I believed that it was all real, that it was all very real. I knew and I met other wrestlers that my dad wrestled and it was always put to me as, "Well, when we're in the ring, it's business and when we're not, it's not." It was that simple. So I found myself as a kid growing up having the classic arguments with kids who would come to school and say, "Wrestling's fake, it's not real." Having seen my dad come home with his head taped up and knowing that the blood was very real, I got into fights. Not that often, I didn't fight that much, but a lot of times it was verbal confrontations. I grew up defending the wrestling business.

Keller: When did you finally find out the nature of pro wrestling matches?

DiBiase: I think I was about 13. After you've been around it a long time and you get older... Of course, the business back then was different in that it wasn't that easy to see through. But anyway, I can remember going to my older brother. I was afraid to go to my dad and even suggest it. I remember going to my older brother and saying, "I've seen this and I've seen that. Tell me the truth." He said, "I'll kill you if you ever repeat that I said this..." but then he filled me in on reality. I didn't lose a bit of respect for it. As a matter of fact, I gained more respect for it because all this time, I didn't know. I lived with this man, I grew up with this man, I fought for this business, and I didn't know. He was very good at what he did. I had my doubts, but I didn't know.

Keller: Compared to today, there were enough wrestlers who tried to make it look real that such was actually possible, right?

DiBiase: If I went out right now today with the people in the wrestling business being educated the way they are—if I went out today and wrestled Ric Flair, Bret Hart, and some of the matches I had with Jake the Snake, although

some of the things with the snake were very theatrical, but those matches themselves, I could make you believe.

Keller: Is that part of the fun in being a wrestler today of your skill level—going out there and making a discriminating crowd believe?

DiBiase: Yes. Again, I come from the old school. I don't want to knock what's been done. I really don't. A lot of people say it ultimately killed the business. And everybody wants to point a finger at Vince McMahon and say, "You did this to the business and look where the business is today." Well, look where the business was. I mean, the stereotyped image of professional wrestling as I was a kid growing up and as I got older was your seedy, smoke-filled arena, kind of a lower-class—not low class, but blue-collar type—everyday, working guy type of crowd. Not your lawyer, your doctor, your dentist, your businessman, your middle- or upper-class families. I'm not knocking anybody. Even my father being a wrestler, wrestlers didn't make the kind of living then that some of them do now. I mean, there were a lot of lean years. At any rate, that was the image of wrestling. It wasn't a very popular thing to do.

Keller: That goes back to whether or not you felt lucky to be the son of a wrestler?

DiBiase: I did. I thrived on it. I loved to watch it. I was very much into my dad and what he did. I was just very much into my dad as a person, too. That's the difference. Had I not been loved the way I was, had I not been raised the way I was, had I not been given the values I was given, it might have made a big difference in the way I looked at him and the way I looked at wrestling. But as I grew older, I found out wrestling is a business and I still have a great deal of respect for it. Even as much as I loved it, my father said, "I will support you in anything you do." Today, I have three sons, 6, 11, and 16, and all three of them are very much into soccer, even the little one. Here I have three sons and all these years later I find myself telling them the same thing that my father told me.

I see so many other parents when you go to the soccer game and these moms and dads are pushing their children into sports, be it baseball or football or whatever, like, "This is what I want you to do." They're pushing them and pushing and pushing. Well, you push a kid like that, you might get something for a while, but actually you're alienating them. You're pushing them away, ultimately. If it's not what they really want to do, it's what you want to do. Or maybe it's something you as a parent wanted to do, but you never could, so you wanted to live that through your child. What I'm saying is that's wrong.

My dad was not only a great professional

wrestler, he was a national collegiate heavyweight wrestling champion at Nebraska. My father was one of four men in the history of the University of Nebraska to letter eight times in varsity sports, four years as a football player and four years as a wrestler. I can't remember the year now, but he was AAU Heavyweight Wrestling Champion nationally. He would've gone to the Olympics, but a knee injury playing football cancelled that one out. As a matter of fact, that's where the "Iron" Mike name came from. That's what he wrestled as. In college, they told him if he worked really hard after the knee injury he would probably walk normally again, but he would never be in competitive sports. He was right back the next year, thus the name "Iron Mike."

As much as he encouraged us to do whatever we wanted to do, he did say, "If it comes from your heart and you're willing to make the sacrifices necessary to attain that goal, I will support you—save one. Wrestling." He said, "I do not want you to be in this business. As a kid I didn't understand. I thought, 'Gosh, you've done all of this, you've accomplished all this, why would you not want me to do what you do?'" Well, here I am all these years later and understand fully well why. For somebody who loved it so much, people have to be asking, "How could you love it so much and have done so much in it and have it have been so good to you, yet not want your kids to do it?" As the "Million Dollar Man" says, "Everything has a price." Life, in the wrestling business, comes at a very high price.

Keller: To what type of person might you recommend pro wrestling as a career?

DiBiase: If you're going to be an eternal bachelor, if you're going to remain single, okay. If you're smart enough and good enough to make that big money and save that big money and put it away, good. Great. But if you're a man, like so many men are, that when you're a kid, 19, 20, 21 years old, the world's a playground. You can't wait to get out there and discover it all. You get to travel and see new places and meet all of these new people. It's great. But as you get older, you want a family, you want a wife, you want a home, you want children. This business is the absolute pits for being a family man. And there are no guarantees.

Anybody who I talk to who wants to get into the business, regardless of what you say, when young guys come to me today and ask about the wrestling business, I'm gonna tell them all the pitfalls as well so they don't go in blind saying, "Gosh, I didn't know it was going to be like this." I have been one of the very fortunate few to do very well in this business. I happened to be at the right place at the right time. Regardless of who you are, how talented you are, whether you are a wrestler or a singer or a football player,

whatever, timing is everything—being at the right place at the right time. I was in the wrestling business in its biggest day by far. I was fortunate enough to be part of it at that time.

But, still, the sacrifices that I've made... I was married and divorced. My oldest son is by my previous marriage. I was married when I was still in school. I struggled. There were a lot of reasons why it didn't work, but being young and dumb was probably one of them. Not really knowing. You have this ideological idea of what love and family life is and then you find out it's not what you thought.

Keller: And you find out how people can grow apart when they originally got together when they're so young.

DiBiase: Very much so. You have to stay very focused. The temptations of the world are out there and they're tenfold for guys in this business. The women in every town, the drugs that are offered to you, the alcohol.

Keller: A lot of people see that as a glamorous life. Is it?

DiBiase: A lot of times people do say, "Gosh, what a glamorous life. You travel. You see all these places. You're popular. You're recognized everywhere you go. Man, that's great." Well, there are times when you really appreciate it. There are times when it's very gratifying to be recognized. But there are also times when some guys let it go to their head and they start living in a fantasy where they think they're somebody special just because they're so recognized. That's the ego that takes over. I think every young guy has gone through that from time to time. But after a while, the popularity of being recognized everywhere you go can be a real burden.

Keller: For example, look at Michael Jordan who lived his life in a hotel room when not on the basketball court.

DiBiase: The ultimate. Michael Jackson, regardless of what other problems he might have, he's a prisoner of his stardom. He can't go anywhere. It gets to where it's very nice for people to say "Hello." and "How are you?" and "Hey I know you, I watch you, thank you," but I want a life of my own, too. I don't want to be put under a microscope and have everybody know everything that I do, what I eat for breakfast. But anyway, that's a burden. It's the burden of being away from the family. Why do you think so many musicians and so many athletes and even businessmen who travel all the time, flight attendants that travel all the time, and have families—why do you think they end up with drug problems and alcohol problems. It's a very lonely life. You tell people that and they go, "Lonely? Everybody in the world knows you, how could you be lonely." Because if you have a family and you have children,

You have to stay very focused. The temptations of the world are out there and they're tenfold for guys in this business. The women in every town, the drugs that are offered to you, the alcohol.

that's what you love. You're in a different city every day. You're in an environment where you might know the airport, the coliseum, the hotel, your way around a little bit, but do you really know the area? No. You're in a foreign place. And there are people who recognize you as that persona on television. They don't know you, the person.

Keller: All that said, are there any regrets in terms of the direction you chose to go?

DiBiase: All in all, no. No, only because I survived. In other words, I've dealt with those different problems along the way. Fortunately I have survived. I never ended up in drug rehab. Okay, I didn't survive my first marriage, but I have been successfully married now again for 12 years. That has not been all peachy, living happily ever after. I have a great wife who, over the years and with the problems of being apart and trying to stay focused on what's really important, I have learned to appreciate greatly. I'm very thankful that I have the woman that I have.

Again, back to my dad saying he didn't want me to be a wrestler. Had he lived, very possibly I wouldn't have been a wrestler. Out of respect and out of fear. (laughs) He died in the ring. He had a heart attack in the ring in Lubbock, Texas when I was 15 years old. Even after that, I still wanted to try. I wasn't sure then. We had been in Nebraska. I attended my freshman year of high school there, played football, did very well. Wrestled, did very well. And we had gone to Texas. My dad was going to wrestle for three more years and retire. And that summer he had a heart attack and died.

Keller: At ringside, right?

DiBiase: At ringside. He was as good as dead at ringside. They got an ambulance to him and they declared him dead on arrival, but basically yes. Big culture shock. That was Amarillo, Tex.

where we were living. It happened in Lubbock, Texas. So I go back to this little town in Southern Arizona where my mother's parents lived, where my grandmother had a truckstop cafe, we're talking a one traffic light town. The interstate goes around the town now. If you blink, you're gonna miss it. Wilcox, Arizona. We buried my father there and I finished high school there.

But with the things that he gave me as far as character building, set your goals, stick to your guns—I tell kids this today—if you want something bad enough, if you're willing to make the sacrifices necessary, you can have anything you want. Once again, when the "Million Dollar Man" says, "Everybody's got a price," well, everything does indeed have a price. It's whether you are willing to pay that price.

So I went through high school focused basically on football. They didn't have a wrestling program there. I didn't totally forget about wrestling, but it was kind of out of the picture for those three years. I ended up with a full ride on a football scholarship to the University of Arizona and I'm watching TV one day and there are the Funks. Dory Funk Sr. and my father were very good friends. They were coming to Tucson. I went to visit to say, "Hey, how are you guys doing?" To make a long story short, I ended up going on the recruiting trip to West Texas State back around the familiar environment around some people from this business I had known my whole life and decided to go back there to go to school and play football. And that was when people said, "Why are you going to West Texas State?" They were a good football school at the time, but not a big school compared to the University of Arizona. In the back of my mind, even though dad was saying "I don't want this for you," I was thinking already, "Maybe I do want to try wrestling. If I get around the Funks and around that environment, I'll be close to it and I'll want it"

Keller: Was that environment something you looked back on fondly?

DiBiase: Yes. Those were the happy years of my childhood, when my dad was alive. When my father died, my mother, god bless her, she turned to alcohol, dropped off into depression, and I became my younger brother's father as well as his brother. It was a difficult time. So I looked back on those years (around the wrestling business with my father) as something I wanted back.

At any rate, I went to West Texas State, played football there. I was a physical education major. So in the summer of 1975, I left school and moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. I had refereed some during the summers when I was playing ball. In that summer I was going to give it a try. I said, "I'm gonna wrestle this summer.

I'm gonna get trained. I'm gonna see if this is what I really want." Things happened pretty fast, actually. I mean, I grew up watching all the time. I had a natural feel for it. There are a lot of second generation wrestlers who just fell into it and it was so natural for them. Of course, it's out of love. You loved it, you watched it, you grew up with it, you had a feel for it, you had a love for it that is a burning desire to excel.

I can remember going in the ring, knowing I was green as grass, and saying, "I may screw up here a lot, but if I don't do anything else, these people aren't going to see through anything I do. If I think they can see through it, I'm not going to try it." That was my attitude. That's one of the arguments I would still have with somebody who's saying, "Ted, you're thinking old school, you're thinking old school." If you go to a magic show and he shows you how he does the trick, then why do you want to stay and watch? If you go to a movie, and somebody tells you the outcome, tells you the way it's going to end before you sit down and watch it, then you've ruined it. So what I say is, most people understand today that wrestling is entertainment, it's a sport, but it's also an entertainment. When you go in there, still, even though you know it's entertainment, when you go in to sit down and watch, for the period of time that you're in there, the more believable, the more real that I can make that for you while you're there, the more you're going to get into it. I mean, that's just the way I feel about it.

There's another aspect to it. When you look at kids, even the young kids, you have to give them a variety of things. I agree there are times when you have to make them laugh. I don't agree with just being blatant about it to the point where you're insulting about it.

Keller: In your last few years in wrestling, were there more fellow wrestlers who were uptight about you taking things too seriously or more wrestlers uptight about not exposing the business? Of the two extremes, who were there more of?

DiBiase: Well, it just depends on when they came along. If they were the Bret Harts and the Jake Roberts and the guys like that, they leaned like I did toward a little more serious wrestling. Don't get me wrong, though. I went to New York the first time in '79. I worked for Vince Sr. Vince Jr. was the commentator. When I went back and I talked to Vince and I signed on with the WWF, I told him, "You know, Vince, when I first watched what you were doing, I thought you were going to kill the business, but I have to take my hat off to you." He took wrestling to new heights, he drew the largest indoor crowd in the history of anything. He dressed it up, he came clean, more or less. He said, "This is a sport, but it is entertainment." Now I do have to respect him for it. I mean, again, I've had my arguments back and forth with Vince about

different things and he's good about that. He says, "You're entitled to your opinion. I'll listen to anything you have to say, as long as you know that as long as you are working for me, that what I want to do and the way we go is ultimately my decision. I'm the one paying for it." I go, "That's fine." And I still feel that way. There are times now that I see things that I think are done very well, and there're times when I think they're going too far.

But again, I'm talking as one of the guys. I haven't been the one who has to constantly come up with new ideas, constantly think of new ways to entertain the people to make it different, to make it new, to keep it fresh. That's hard, that's very hard.

One of the bigger problems I see is turning over talent. When I left the WWF, I even got a call from somebody in D.C. asking, "Are you leaving the WWF because of the ongoing investigation into Vince McMahon." I said, "Number one, I think the investigation and indictment and all that is a bunch of crap." I left after eight years because I felt it was time for a change. That's it. It's like spaghetti. Even if you like it, having it every day for eight years would get to be too much.

In general, there needs to be more turnover of talent, more new guys. Just by the very nature of what the wrestling business evolved to, when it went from being local territories to one great big monster, then it became harder for young guys to go somewhere and learn the trade. There is nowhere for them to go to groom.

Keller: When you began training that summer to become a wrestler, how prominent in the back of your mind were your father's late nights, mood swings, injuries, complaints about promoters, whatever the negatives were that he passed on to you about being a wrestler?

DiBiase: I wasn't thinking of that at all. All I was thinking was, "I want to get out there and do it." I mean, I was as gung-ho as they come. (laughs) So much so (they'd say), "You don't have to pay him much, just let him go out there."

Keller: When was the first time you stepped inside the wrestling ring?

DiBiase: When I was a kid and the matches were over, I would go into the ring and run the ropes and jump off of them and mess around a lot. The time I got in the ring in front of a crowd, ironically, I think it's kind of eerie. I got a call one day from Terry Funk. I was in school and he said, "Teddy, what are you doing?" I said, "Nothin'." He said, "We need a referee in Lubbock. Can you come referee?" So the first time I stepped foot in the ring, it was as a referee in the very ring and very building my father last wrestled in.

Keller: How did that hit you?

DiBiase: It was pretty emotional for me. Here I was, stepping in and picking up where he left off.

Keller: What would you have done had you not gotten into wrestling?

DiBiase: Coach. Be a teacher. My older brother and one of my uncles are both teachers and one's a teacher and a coach. I kind of thought that's what I would like to do. I don't know now all these years later that I could stand to do that, though.

Keller: You talk about how natural it was for you to become acclimated to professional wrestling. Were any aspects of the training and your early matches tougher than you expected?

DiBiase: I don't know if it was tougher than I expected. When I first started training, I wrestled amateur a little bit and that's pretty tough. I don't want to make a comparison there, but you have to condition your body for whatever it is you're going to put it through. Football is different. I came out of football thinking I was in shape. I went into wrestling and found out I wasn't in shape at all, comparatively. There have been pro football players who have thought they would go on to become a professional wrestler and couldn't stick with it. It's a different kind of abuse. The abuse you put your body through—your body becomes conditioned to what you do to it.

And the first year, I was bruised a lot and had mat burns all over my knees and elbows and different things. Now is I'm going, "What did I do to myself?" I've had both of my knees operated on. My doctor tells me I've got the knees of a 65 year old man. Yeah, me and every other football player who has had cartilage removed.

Keller: At one point in your career in wrestling did you realize or think to yourself you were one of the more talented wrestlers? All humility aside, you have to admit you were one of the better workers. Did it take a long time to realize that?

DiBiase: No, actually, it only took a couple of years. I don't want to sound conceited. It was more the encouragement I was receiving. It was established veterans of the business who were telling me, making statements to me, like, "Ted, you're learning so fast." They would look at me and say, "You have an unusual understanding of the business for so short a period of time." Then they would encourage me and say, "Look kid, you're going to go a long way."

One of the best things anyone told me, and it's so true, "You're a new guy on the block, you're a nice, easy-going guy." I've got a laid-back personality. There's not too many people I don't get along with. You've really gotta step on me before I get mad. So, you'd come into the business and everybody seems to

I would always say that if I don't do anything else, I'm not going to throw a punch until it looks good enough that it looks like a punch. They may know that I'm not really experienced, but they're definitely not going to say I'm a phony.

get along with me. What I was told was: "Everybody's going to be your friend, Ted, and everybody's going to try to help you watch your match, listen to your interview, and give you points and everything. Everybody's gonna help you and your going to be a friend to everybody until they realize you're becoming a threat. Once you've become a threat, once they realize that you're going to be that good, then it all changes. The guy says to himself, 'I'm gonna help myself right out of a job.' Then it all changes."

It's so true. The old saying is it's lonely at the top. You have to learn to tune some things out. I got that. There were just a couple of times when people would say, "DiBiase, you got a break. You made money in the business because your dad knew all of these guys. All these guys who are promoters are friends of your dad." I said, "Look, I may have been given the initial opportunity out of respect and friendship for my father, but I don't care if you're promoting boxing, wrestling, or a rock & roll concert, given the opportunity—given the ball—if you can't run and score the touchdown, they're not going to give you the ball anymore. That kind of stopped all of that."

Keller: Who were some of the wrestlers who helped you the most in the early years?

DiBiase: Terry and Dory Funk. Dick Murdoch is a classic. Dick can be such a clown. He was a guy who had such a natural feel for the business. I mean, even me, before a big match, I'll go over some things in my head. He's one of the few people I know who can wrestle cold. He could be eating a hotdog and telling you a story one minute and then the bell rings and he says, "I gotta go." He runs out there with nothing in

his head and has a masterpiece. He's that good. He's one of those types of people. And Dory and Terry, too. Jack Brisco. Harley Race. The man who was at ringside with my father that tried to resuscitate him and keep him alive when he died was Harley Race. My first big match, my first main event at the Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis when it was the mecca of wrestling was with Harley Race. He put me there. Another guy I've got a lot of time for. He's one of those rare breeds. I don't want to forget anybody. Karl Cox. A great heel.

I was fortunate in that first year that I was in the business that so many people came through the Bill Watts territory. Again, Bill Watts. I hope he reads this. Bill, I don't think he was ever a great worker. He might tell you he wasn't a great worker. But he was a great mind. A great mind.

Keller: And quite the subject of controversy the last couple of years.

DiBiase: Not to get off the track, but I kinda called that shot. When I heard about Bill going down to Atlanta, I knew that Bill had been out and away from the business for a few years. He had gone through and was right on it and right on it and right on it until he was just burnt, just tired of it. I can see how it happens. When he went back there, I said Bill's going to go there and he's gonna try to pick it up and promote it the way it used to be promoted. You can't go back. You can use some of the same things. You can use some of the same fundamentals. But you can never go back. If he had gotten that good mix, he'd have been all right. You can't tell the world we're "sports entertainment" and then rip the mats off the floor and tell everybody, "We're the real deal and they're not." Come on. Who are you trying to fool.

Dave Meltzer is another name. Dave Meltzer's always been great to me. He's always had nice things to say about me. I finally met him. The first time I met him was out in 'Frisco. He said, "Ted, why?" I said, "Why what?" He said, "You're respected by your peers and die-hard wrestling fans as one of the truly great technical wrestlers, the old hardcore wrestlers. Why the WWF?" I said, "Gosh, is it that hard? Why am I in this business? I'm in this business to make money, to make a living. And you've got to go where the money is. That's why. It's not like selling out. You can stand on your pride all day, but it's not going to put any bread on the table." He understood.

I want to make this point good. Here I'm talking to somebody who writes a letter that people read. I don't disagree with it. I know there are a lot of die-hard wrestling fans out there and they want to be informed, they want to know, they want to hear these things. That's great. Where it starts to irritate me is when I read things and see these publications come out

with the whole scenario, the whole angle that's about to be laid out, that's about to happen over the period of five or six weeks in one of these magazines, one of these newsletters, before it happens.

I don't know. Maybe the people who subscribe to the letter don't care. That's another way of looking at it. Regardless of whether they know or not, they're going to be there, they're going to show up. But my way of looking at it is it's like magic. When you take the magic away, you take some of the excitement away.

Keller: The best magicians won't let the press or the fans know what is coming up next.

DiBiase: You're right. I have to agree.

Keller: How would I, or anyone, know what was coming up unless, one, it was very clear to the eye and wasn't very subtle, or two, they decided to run an event in front of people and tape stuff that won't air for, in the case of WCW a few months, in the case of the WWF a few weeks. That's a money-saving choice they make, but it's in front of an audience for public consumption.

DiBiase: I couldn't agree more. That's where the business hurts itself. I couldn't agree more. It gets back down to talent. Talent is hard to find.

Keller: Have you been a mentor to young talent, either overtly or by example?

DiBiase: Now I'm pretty much away from it. But when I was there, I would talk to guys. At the level and position where I was you would find you didn't have time. I talked to a lot of guys, a lots of guys would ask about being trained or being coached or whatever. I would spend some time with them and tell them about the pitfalls. I wouldn't paint them a rosy picture because it's not. I've heard stories of guys going out there and some guy paying him two or three or four thousand dollars and what does he get? Nothing. Maybe he learns a few things, but he's not guaranteed a job. He's getting job placement. I've cautioned people. If in watching, I see somebody who I think has potential, I'll bring it to the attention of the promotion. Or if I see guys who show me that they want it. Any guy who's ever come up to me and said, "Mr. DiBiase, would you please watch my match and help me?" I always will, unless there is no way for me to do it. If I could help somebody, I would help them.

Keller: How often did that happen where somebody would come up and do that?

DiBiase: Quite a bit.

Keller: Did the number of times that happened go down in recent years?

DiBiase: I wouldn't say that. Not really. Attitudes change. The one thing I would change

businesswise as far as young talent? If they could take a lesson from Japan, they should take a lesson. I can remember—this is going back to my memories as a boy and things change—but I can remember when I was a kid before I was a wrestler, when I would go into the dressing room as just my father's son and sit there quietly. Young wrestlers, if you were a young a wrestler, a greenhorn, you didn't speak unless you were spoken to. It was kind of like, "When they get ready to tell me what to do, they're going to let me know."

I've run into a few times, not too many times, some fairly green guy would come up to me and start telling me what he wants to do and how he's going to do it. And I go, "Hey, wait a minute. When you've put in 15 years, then you tell me what you want to do. Until you do, shut up and listen."

In Japan, they get a young guy and to break him in, they work him out and they work him out. There's a certain process of evolution over there. You go from one step to the next step to the next step to the next step. Occasionally you skip a step or two, but by the time a young guy breaks into the business over there, by the time he is mature enough and old enough and seasoned enough to be given that top spot, he has worked his butt off for it. He has earned it and he respected it. That's what's wrong with the business (in the United States) today.

The worst thing is for some bodybuilder—hey, I have respect for a guy who's disciplined enough to condition his body like that, I can respect that—but just because you condition your body like that (doesn't make you a wrestler). They look good and they're pretty. A guy came up to me and said, "I want to become a wrestler." I go, "Yeah, okay, so what?" Don't walk up to me when you're 30 years old and tell me you want to become a wrestler. It's too late. It takes year. It takes five or six years to really get comfortable enough with what the business is all about to really grasp what it is all about. It's hard to explain.

Keller: When you were in front of the crowds for the first few months, were you very nervous and if so did that keep up for years, or was that something that never bothered you and you thrived on it?

DiBiase: Yeah, I was nervous at first. It wasn't stage fight. I was nervous. I was so concerned and I loved the business so much. I was so concerned about protecting the business, my greatest fear was doing something they could see through. That's why I would always say that if I don't do anything else, I'm not going to throw a punch until it looks good enough that it looks like a punch. I'm not going to try something and screw it up. They may know that I'm not really experienced, but they're definitely not going to say I'm a phony. Something to that effect.

It took a while, maybe a couple of years. When you've been in it 18 years, people ask if it's hard to get psyched up. After this long, going into the ring is like walking across the street.

Keller: Did you wrestle in the ring for you and your opponent to put together a great match or was your main goal to consciously get that instant critics' review from the fans?

DiBiase: You're there to entertain. If you're a heel, to walk through the curtain and get that enormous boo, that's the rush. That's the adrenaline. Yes, you do look for that. You do want that. That's how you know you're getting your job done.

At the same time, I would say—you could almost call it a mistake—before I was real seasoned, let's say a promotion was trying to push me strong and make me really strong—sometimes I would hurt myself in that instead of being stronger in that match, I would do whatever it took to get that match "over." In other words, it was more important to me to have a better match than how good or bad I looked. It's kind of like having a better match with a guy I shouldn't have it with.

Keller: In other words, you made it look too competitive against guys who weren't supposed to be at your level?

DiBiase: Right.

Keller: Which is what a lot of people would say Flair did way too much of during the Crockett years.

DiBiase: Yes he did.

Keller: How conscious were you of your efforts in the early days and even the middle years of your career to polish your persona. We talk about how now some guys coming in worry about their persona first and then later ask, "By the way, how do I execute a suplex?" How conscious were you, besides learning how to wrestle, of developing that image?

DiBiase: Well, I really didn't think that much about a persona. I've been both ways. I've been a babyface and I've been a heel. Obviously I've been a heel more. I didn't really work on it, or consciously think about projecting a certain character. I just let it happen early on. I just let it happen. When Vince called me and said, "You're the Million Dollar Man," he had known enough and seen enough of me to know that the heel character that I projected was already a character that was somewhat cocky and aloof.

I got this by watching other people. By watching my father work. By watching certain heels work. When I would walk into the ring, I would carry myself in a way and look at people like I was looking down on them, like "Who are you?" That's that feeling, that thing you get between you and the fans. That's what they picked up on. When I became this "Million

Before I was real seasoned... I would hurt myself in that instead of being stronger in a match, I would do whatever it took to get that match "over." In other words, it was more important for me to have a better match than how good or bad I looked.

Dollar Man," I remember talking to Paul Orndorff and he said, "Your work speaks for itself. It's gonna come, it's there. Now concentrate on becoming this 'Million Dollar Man.' Become this character." That's the first time I ever consciously worked on projecting that—and I had fun doing it. (laughs)

Keller: I believe you did (laughs). In the same area, how hard did you work on interviews in the early years? Certainly you had a different style to emulate. You were looking at a Jack Brisco-style interview rather than a Hulk Hogan-style interview. How hard did you work on that, or again was that something that just came naturally?

DiBiase: I was told a long time ago—and Terry Funk was the guy who told me this—he said, "Ted, your ability to get in front of a TV camera interview is as important, if not more important, than your ability in the ring." Charisma is a god-given quality. You either have it or you don't. It's not something you develop. Fortunately, I guess I've got that "thing." I remember the first year and a half I was in the business, I was working opening matches and getting beat by everybody, serving my apprenticeship. Every Wednesday morning in Shreveport, Louisiana they did interviews for the week. And the top guys who had to do interviews had to be there at about nine o'clock in the morning. The night before, Tuesday night, was Shreveport. The show's over and all the guys would go to the lounge at the hotel or out to some bar and have a good time. I didn't have to get up, I didn't have to be there because I was the opening match wrestler, but I was there every week. I was there every Wednesday and watched interviews for three or four hours.

Keller: Was that atypical for an opening match guy?

DiBiase: It was different. Dick Murdoch said, "You need to come down here. Come down here and watch. And watch the matches." If you watch, you learn. An idiot can figure out who's good and who's not good. You watch the guys you like who impress you with their ability and you watch them. See how they do what they do. The thing that ended up happening is that by watching or being there, when somebody couldn't be there or something happened where they needed somebody to fill in the interview slot, I was there. And (my push) started that way.

The thing I kept thinking was "be believable." I remember my dad. He never hollered and screamed, but he always made a point. He talked with intelligence and he made a point, he told a story. Whether it was as a heel or as a good guy, he made it more real. Again, it's that character. My "Million Dollar Man" character had a laugh—ha, ha, ha, ha—but when it came down to whatever point I was making, I made it.

People ask, "You were in the WWF for seven years, how did you stay there that long in the position you were in?" Because you know how to do it, how to go out there and have a match and take care of yourself. You accomplish the goal you set out to accomplish, but you do it without killing yourself. There's a way to do it, a way to do everything.

But interviews are very important. Hey, look at Dusty Rhodes. Dusty Rhodes is not going to win any beauty pageants.

Keller: Well, only if Dick Murdoch is his competition.

DiBiase: (laughs) Dick Murdoch, you talk about bodies, nothing. But brother, I tell you what, there are few better on the mic. He charmed the people. Junkyard Dog. I made a lot of money with him. Junkyard Dog, (laughs) you can call him a lot of things, but "great worker" is not one of them. He's a very good friend of mine. But I tell you what, he would get on that microphone and he'd make everybody love him. Black, white, brown, green, he made everybody love him. He could do it. There are just some people who could really, really do it. Roddy Piper, one of the best.

Keller: Was part of your longevity not becoming cliched? A lot of wrestlers, it seems, once they've found a successful formula, become somewhat predictable and cliched behind the microphone. Was that something you consciously tried to avoid doing even in the somewhat antiseptic atmosphere of the WWF and the "Event Centers?"

DiBiase: I tried to, yeah, because every situation was different. I tell you what. I was guilty. There are times when it's easy to get into

a rut. I mean, there were times—I can't pick out any particular situation, but I can remember this happening. But when Hulk came back in the thing with Beefcake and we ended up having the main event in Wrestlemania last year—when we came back and Hogan was back, it was an angle where we were going to knock somebody down and leave them lying and get some real heat. I heard Hulk do his interview and I got fired up. So I did my interview. One of the guys working the camera got fired up and said, "That's the old Million Dollar Man." I just looked at him and smiled and said, "You're right. We all get in a rut." I said, "But I'm excited again. I have something to be excited about."

You get into a program sometimes and if you don't do enough to keep it exciting and to keep it interesting, it goes on and on. There's only so many ways you can say something about somebody to where you're grasping for something. I've been guilty of getting into those ruts. As good as Ric Flair is, I've seen it myself, there have been times when I've seen Flair get into that match—rut where a lot of the things he does become very predictable. That's just, again, years of doing it, years of having to do it repetitiously. If Ric and I went out there, we would just feel it as it goes. Where, if you get out there with somebody who you know is not going to feel the match the way you do—this is hard to explain—to where they have to totally be led, then it's easier to fall back on a formula. It's kind of like, well, if I take him step by step through it this way, there's no way he can screw it up (laughs). Sometimes that's what I would see in Ric.

There are a lot of reasons we all get into ruts. We've all done it. I've been as guilty of getting into a rut as anybody. But for the most part, I always tried to have the attitude that they've (the fans) paid for it, I'm going to give them their money's worth.

Keller: In your first ten years of wrestling before you went to the WWF, what do you consider the high-point of your career? What was personally most fulfilling?

DiBiase: (pause) I don't know if I can pinpoint one. (pause) The first break I ever had that always comes to mind is St. Louis. There I was, going to St. Louis out of Kansas City and doing okay on TV. Then again, it was the right place, right time—I showed up one day and there's Dick Slater—he's the Missouri Champion—and for whatever reason he could not come back and had to drop the belt. Bruiser Brody was supposed to be there; he wasn't there. Murdoch was supposed to be there; he wasn't there. For what reasons, I don't know. But there I was. They said, "Ted, we're putting the belt on you today." Bang. In a tag match on television, I pinned Harley Race who was at that time the NWA World Heavyweight Champion.

So, how much stronger can you get put over? You just pinned the world champion on TV. You didn't take the belt, but you just pinned the champion.

So my first big, big main event was with Harley Race at the Kiel Auditorium. This was about 1978, 1980. They all run together. I had a good run at that time in St. Louis. Another major step personally was the first time I went to New York. I did well. I was small. I wasn't very big, but they liked me. Vince Sr. liked me. I came in there off of the reputation from St. Louis. I think Vince expected a bigger guy. I know he did. But nonetheless, there I was. That little deal I did with Pat Patterson way back then, I had my little run there. But that all ended up years later having a lot to do with me coming back. So that was a very important time as a stepping stone that took me up.

When I went back to work for Bill (Watts) was another. When I went back to work for Bill, I was a babyface for a long time. I would say the biggest turning point as far as me taking off and really coming into my own and being me—I know Ernie Ladd would like to take credit for this—but Paul Orndorff had left, the Samoans had left, they'd been through Bill's territory. At the time, Junkyard Dog and Ted DiBiase were the two top babyfaces. I remember Bill telling me, "Ted, you've got to keep your eyes open. Look around. We need to find, we've got to have, a new strong heel for JYD." JYD was the guy. So I'm thinking, "Who hasn't been through here?" Then all of a sudden it just dawned on me. I thought, "Me!" I'd been here all this time, I've always been a babyface. Junkyard Dog was the best man at my wedding. Everybody knew we were good friends, and that we travelled together and everything. I said, what a bigger surprise than for me to turn. And I told Ernie that. I was a little apprehensive. I had been a baby for so long. I was going to have to polish some new skills.

Ernie's eyes lit up. He took credit for it (laughs). He went to Bill and said, "Hey, Bill, I've got a great idea." It was my idea. And I turned. When I turned heel on Junkyard Dog, it was probably the single most important break in my career. I had one of the greatest runs I ever had with him. I developed a lot faster. I had to develop—I was working with Junkyard Dog (laughs). I can still remember calling Terry Funk and saying, "It's not like going out there and wrestling somebody who's really good, who's easy. I gotta think of ways to make these good." JYD was very limited in what he could do. Terry told me, "You've got to work around him. You've got to create excitement. You have got to create motion in that ring." That's how I developed. I was put in a situation where I had this great idea and I had to run with it, make it work. It forced me to develop in a lot of ways I might not have for a while.

Keller: Did you ever regret the turn during your series of matches with him?

DiBiase: There are always times when you think you should have changed something or do something different, but it wasn't that bad.

Keller: Do you remember your first paycheck?

DiBiase: My very first?

Keller: Yes.

DiBiase: I think I do.

Keller: Do you remember how much it was?

DiBiase: Three-hundred bucks. That's me working a full week. I refereed a couple of times, but I can't remember what I got then. But when I went down there and worked a full week for Bill, I remember I made 300 dollars. And I could just about count on that 300 (laughs).

Keller: You can use your discretion on this question, but I'll ask it anyway. What was the most you made in any one-year period before you went to the WWF?

DiBiase: I was working for Bill and working Japan at the same time. I was Stan Hansen's partner. I was going to Japan for, I think, 12 weeks out of the year on three four-week tours, the rest of the year was with Watts. I think it was 150, or 160 thousand dollars. (laughs) Then I moved to fantasy land (WWF). Then I had to pinch myself. "Is this really happening to me?"

Keller: Did you double, triple, quadruple that amount? Or don't you want to say?

DiBiase: I don't want to say what I made. I don't let anybody know what I made. But I could safely say it tripled. I came in right after Wrestlemania III. I came in after Wrestlemania III when it was hot as a firecracker and got the biggest push anybody could ever get. And went from that to being Andre's partner everywhere. Think about it. (laughs)

Keller: And you were part of what I think is still the largest audience ever—the Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant match on NBC. And you won the WWF Title there—well, sort of (laughs).

DiBiase: The largest audience ever, and that's when I got the belt, in my underhanded, little way.

Keller: Is there anything you would change about your first few years in the wrestling business?

DiBiase: Not really. I can't really say that because everything was a learning experience. It happened into that area and was exposed to a lot of great talent. Bill had a lot of great talent coming through there. I went to a very poorly operated and sad territory in Kansas City. Good ol' Bob Geigel, who I still like and was a good friend of my dad, just wasn't a great promoter. It

was a learning experience. I didn't make a lot of money there. I starved. But it made me appreciate where I had come from. It made me appreciate how much talent I had been exposed to. I went from a territory busting with talent to a territory with virtually none. You could say it was bad, but at the same time, I learned.

Keller: Before your first tour of Japan, did you think that would end up being a major part of your career?

DiBiase: I had no idea. I wanted to go to Japan the first time I went to Japan just because I wanted to see Japan. I had no idea back then. I went to Japan and stayed a month and I was homesick. I was ready to get out of there. I went again for five weeks and it was tougher. One time I went over there and said, "I'll never go back." Not because I didn't like the country or didn't like the people, but I was bored. There was nothing to do. I was a young guy and there wasn't a lot to fill your time with. Then I saw what it had become for Brody, (Stan) Hansen, and different people.

Again, right place at the right time. I was over there on tour. Stan was on the tour. This was after Stan had moved from Inoki (New Japan) to Baba (All Japan). Here I am, Stan, Brody, and myself, all West Texas State football players. As a matter of fact, Stan Hansen was a student assistant coach at West Texas State when I was a senior in high school being recruited. That's when I met Stan Hansen, when I was recruited by West Texas State. Anyway, neither one of us thought we'd end up where we did.

But, I was there when Brody jumped. Stan and Brody had been together for so long and they were the hottest item over there. And Brody went over to Inoki. I was there at a time when Stan had to find a new partner. He came over to me one night and said, "What do you think of this." And I said, "Oh my god." (laughs) I said, "What do you mean, what do I think?" Stan said, "I just wanted to know what you thought before I said anything to Baba." I can't say enough good about Japan.

Keller: Was it tough to give up your Japan deal when you joined the WWF?

DiBiase: I was there, I was doing great. I was right in the middle of it when I got the call from New York. I left there with Baba's blessing. He understood it was a big break for me. He said, "The door's always open." And when I called to go back (last year), the door was in fact wide open. I mean, I couldn't have been treated any better. I marched right back over there and in the first night at the Budokan in Tokyo they put the tag straps right back on Hansen and me. I couldn't have come back bigger. We were treated very well. I went through the next tour and actually wrestled most of the next tour with my neck hurting. I remember this. It's easy to remember the date because the day I got hurt,

it's my mother and father's wedding anniversary—Oct. 2. I initially got hurt a year ago, but this was the second time and I suffered through the rest of the tour with it. Then I came back and filed with Lloyds of London.

The next tour was the tag team tournament. I had to at least go back over and try. I figured—well, I didn't know exactly how the deal worked with the insurance company. I found out, (laughs) if you call them and tell them you're hurt, and you keep wrestling, they're gonna think you're not hurt. I was just wanting to take a risk and get through the tournament.

So it was the tag team tournament and because Baba had treated me so well, I was going to try to make it. I left three days into it. I told Baba I just could't go on. Every time I took a bump there was a shooting pain in my arm. I could hardly lift my arm up. My fingers were going numb. I already had a doctor tell me I was a fool for going over there. Fortunately, he (Baba) understood really well because he had had something like that himself before.

I just can't say enough good about the company. I was there three days and when I left, he said, "Go home, get well, and you let me know when you're ready to come back." That's pretty reassuring. "Don't worry about your job, you've always got a job here," is what he told me. The really nice thing he did was, after three days of a three week tour, he paid me for the entire tour. Merry Christmas. That's the kind of guy he is. I can't say enough about that organization.

Keller: Before you went to Japan, did you have preconceived notions of what it was going to be like there and if so how did those notions change when you got there?

DiBiase: No, I had no idea. All I knew was not to expect the fans to be very responsive. That was the biggest shock to me, that the people sat there very quietly and watched. Back then I couldn't tell much difference other than the work.

Keller: Did you work the match in a different style since you weren't filling the U.S.-style role of a traditional babyface or heel?

DiBiase: No, I just worked the same. I was just aggressive. What I realized was—and it took me a while to grasp it, to get the way they think over there—being aggressive is the key. Like you said, they don't so much have heel or babyface roles. If you're a heel, as long as you're tough and aggressive, they respect it. You make a little adjustment for that. But the more I got over and the more they liked me was because I could wrestle, I could do technical things, I never gave up, I was exciting.

Keller: Were the demands in the ring tougher than in even Bill Watts's territory or

The thing that would bother me about Bill (Watts) is he would degrade a guy in front of everybody. If you've got something to say, get me off into the corner and tell me.

just different?

DiBiase: No. If I was going to make a comparison now, it's a little tougher over there. Physically, it's tougher. A little snugger, a little harder, a little tougher.

Keller: Wrestling in Japan has been successful for many years and Japan's style is epitomized by All Japan's in-ring style and the manner in which it conducts its business. Are there aspects of Japanese wrestling that could be brought over here to help the U.S. wrestling scene—other than what you mentioned earlier about training wrestlers?

DiBiase: I don't know. The people over there are used to a certain style. The way they've been educated to wrestling has been different. I don't know that would work here. The cultures are different.

I see some things they are doing over there that are going to hurt them. As strong and as snug and as much wrestling as they do, it's overkill. I can remember when you suplexed a guy off the top rope and it's over. A piledriver, one of them, was a finish. Going way back, a dropkick was a finish. Now, you've got guys over there having 30 minute matches and you see everything you could conceivably think of doing being done to a guy and he kicks out and he kicks out and he kicks out. Over the top rope onto the floor, piledriver, and double-suplexed this way, and then they beat him with a small package. There are still some things that don't make sense. It's just too much. It's gotten that way over here, too.

I see guys get into these routines where the spots get so long and elaborate that they start looking choreographed. But if you get back to the basics, something much simpler would be better.

Keller: Does doing devastating moves too much, too often without long term effects during a given match do as much to expose the business, to use a cliché term, as selling a missed punch? Are they both in your opinion equally as bad?

DiBiase: Yes, I would say so. After a while, yeah. I've tried to teach so many guys that more

is not necessarily better. I can remember when I was young and I was really excited wrestling Killer Karl Cox on TV. I got him in the corner and I was just killing him. He just sat down and said, "Let me know when you're through." I was punching him faster than he could sell.

I tell a guy, if you kick a guy 15 times, you're kicking him so fast and hard the people can't see it and the guy can't sell it. Whereas, if you back that guy in there and you break away clean one time and a second time and a third time, and you hit him with one shot, and he falls onto his butt and grabs his jaw and rolls over and sells it, it means so much more than kicking him 15 times in the corner.

That's the whole point with Japan. I get to watching some of those matches, and they are very, very good, but I say, "Golly, what's it gonna take to beat this guy. You'd have to bring a gun and shoot him to do more damage."

At one time, women were wearing skirts to where you couldn't see their shoes. Then it moved up to skirts below the knee. Then skirts that were just barely covering it. Then where'd it go? It went back to long. I go, why? Because it's different again. I feel the same way about the business. It'll take a while. I've told a lot of guys, "I don't want to discourage you, but I wouldn't count on the business ever being what it was like when Hulk was in his prime and I was in my prime and the WWF was just roaring everywhere. It could happen again, but it's not going to happen again in my lifetime." Every WWF pay-per-view is going to sellout. They sold out Wrestlemania X in poof one day. Tickets were gone. Providence was gone. People are still into it. They're going to wait to see that big show.

Keller: There are probably fewer areas today, though, where they could sell out immediately.

DiBiase: The other thing that has hurt wrestling in the United States is total overexposure. I don't want to say Japan wrestling is better, because they have their problems over there too, but one thing they do have is (only) two TVs. New Japan has a show, one hour and All Japan has a show, one hour. They've got 30 different groups over there. But there are only two hours of wrestling on television a week. So there's not that great overexposure.

There's so much exposure on TV here and the bad part is there's so much so-called wrestling on TV that's absolutely embarrassing. Some of the stuff, geez. I guess there's so many TV stations that these people are desperate for programming. I don't know what it is. You've got two quality shows. You've got Turner's show. The rest of it is crap, basically. I haven't seen all of it, so I don't want my friends out there to be mad.

Keller: To qualify the statement, have you seen, for instance, Smoky Mountain Wrestling?

DiBiase: Okay. Thank you very much. I've heard great things about it. I'm sorry Jim (Cornette), I didn't mean that (laughs).

Keller: Did Bill Watts demand more out of you than others in terms of in-ring efforts than other promoters?

DiBiase: Gosh, Bill, are you going to read this? Bill was very demanding. It's kind of like, I could cuss Bill Watts, but at the same time, I have to thank him. With Bill Watts, it's like that guy who hates that drill instructor. "That no-good so-and-so, he don't care. He's just pushing me." Obviously, when the soldier is overseas and ends up alive because he was pushed so hard, then he's thankful. In this case, it's not that drastic. Yes, Bill was very demanding. He was a screamer. He demanded perfection. And I played football and I had been coached. I had coaches screaming at me, so that didn't bother me.

The thing that would bother me about Bill is he would degrade a guy in front of everybody. If you've got something to say, get me off into the corner and tell me. As far as what I learned from him, and working for him, I can't thank him enough for that, because in the long run, I was paid for it. In the long run, I was very successful in the business because of what I learned working with him and for him. He's one guy who I'll say right up front, Ted was young and naive at first. Ted wasn't strong enough to stand up when he should have stood up at times. I should have made a lot more money. A lot more money from Bill Watts than I did. In the position I was in and for what I meant to that company at that time, when I look back at it knowing what I know now, I was definitely underpaid and overworked.

I left him one time. I was having the run with Junkyard Dog and I wasn't getting any time off. We're talking there were times when I would beg for a day off. I had remarried and my second son who is 11 years old had just been born. Bill was like, you and Dog are the top match, you're in that position, you've got to be there. I can give the guys on the opening match a day off, but I can't give you a day off.

It got to the point where I said, "Bill, I can't take it anymore. I've got a family." He said, "You're leaving money on the table." I said, "I either leave a little money on the table or I lose my family." And I left and went to Atlanta. But, yeah, he drove too hard at times. There are just some considerations I think he should have had as a person, as a human being, for his talent, for the guys who were out there making him money. It was like, I know I'm in a situation and you're making me some money, but show me

respect as a man. Don't drive me like a mule, treat me like an animal. I'm not an animal. We're talking unbelievable road trips. I could tell you stories we don't have the time to tell about trips with people saying, "You can't possibly do that." We did it.

Keller: In terms of driving time and infrequency of days off?

DiBiase: Driving time, wrestle, drive again, wrestle. I'll give you one example. Living in Baton Rouge, we'd wrestle there on Tuesday night. And a lot of us who lived there, some of us would drive up that night. And that would make it easier. I did that occasionally. But some guys, because you lived in Baton Rouge and weren't home that often, it was one more night that you were in your own bed. We would sleep at home and leave at 6 o'clock in the morning, drive 240 miles from Baton Rouge to Shreveport, and you'd get there at 9:30, 10 o'clock. All two lanes. No four lanes. Straight up the middle of Louisiana. We'd do our interviews on Wednesday morning from about 10 to 2:30. You'd go cash your check, grab a bite to eat, and be out of town by 3, 3:30, because you had to drive 200 miles across Louisiana into Mississippi and be in Jackson and wrestle in Jackson at 7:30 that night. The show's over at 9:30 or 10. Back in the car, 160 miles to Baton Rouge. One day. That's one of the bad ones.

I can remember Houma, Louisiana, wrestling there on Sunday night and having to wrestle in Tulsa, Oklahoma the next night and driving it. Houma back to Baton Rouge is 100, and Baton Rouge to Shreveport is 240, and Shreveport to Tulsa is 350, so that's almost 700 miles one way. Then after you were done in Tulsa, you had to turn around and be back in Shreveport the next night. (laughs) Like the "Million Dollar Man" says, everything's got a price.

Keller: So Watts is a type of guy who it sounds like a lot of guys respect him and admire him for certain things, especially business acumen, but in some other ways resented him.

DiBiase: Business-wise, Bill is one of the sharpest guys I know. For him coming up in the business and knowing the business and being able to promote wrestling and really understand it, he's one of the best. And he learned from one of the best, Eddie Graham. So for that, I have to give him credit and for the educations he gave me because I worked for him—outside of the WWF—longer than I worked for anybody.

As a matter of fact, that was the big rumor that when he went down there (to WCW) everybody was sure that I was leaving and going down there. I said, "Hey, I had been through hell once. I don't want to go again."

Keller: Did you have contact with him when he was hired by TBS?

DiBiase: No, I never did talk to him.

Keller: How does the language difference with many of your opponents affect the way you wrestled in Japan?

DiBiase: Some things are just understood. It's kind of like we brought wrestling to Japan—the Americans—and so they understand the wrestling language. Backdrop, dropkick, chop, tackle. They understand the lingo. Even though they may not be able to speak to you, you can get in the ring and talk.

Keller: Leading into the '80s and especially during the early-'80s when you were with the NWA and Mid-South, that was right around the same time Flair was really coming into his own. There was a lot of talk that you might be that long-term NWA Champion, the next Harley Race or Jack Brisco or Dory Funk.

DiBiase: It almost happened. If there's one thing that I could say looking back on my career, is there one thing I didn't do that I wanted to do, to have been the world champion—again, being the world champion in our business is the connotation of being, like, The Guy, as far as the guy who can carry the mail all the time. I was in line for it. As a matter of a fact, the first time I went to Atlanta, it was being talked about.

There were three names in that hat—mine and Flair's and Dusty Rhodes's. There were power structures there and for whatever reason, it didn't happen.

Keller: Was it politics or dumb luck or...

DiBiase: Politics. Ric's a great champion. I don't know if I could have been the champion Ric was. I don't know. It's funny. It's kind of how you compliment somebody. It's like I look at Ric and there are things I see him do in his work that would fascinate me and there were times when I had a match with—well, I won't say who it was with—anyway, I was coming out of the ring and Ric said, I've worked with that guy 20 times and I couldn't have that good of a match with him, so I don't know how you did it. You compliment each other that way. I think I could have done really well with it.

Again, whether it was politics or whatever, timing is everything. It's being the right guy at the right place at the right time. Ric was it. Ric was it.

Keller: How close do you think you came to being NWA Champion?

DiBiase: Very close. Yeah, very close. I think I was right there.

Keller: Before you made the big jump to the WWF, there was still talk, wasn't there, that that might eventually happen?

There were just some considerations I think (Bill Watts) should have had as a person, as a human being, for his talent, for the guys who were out there making him money. I know I'm in a situation and you're making me some money, but show me respect as a man.

DiBiase: At the time I went to the WWF, Jim Crockett had taken over the UWF. Ric and I have been friends for a long time. Ric personally, he'll tell you if you interviewed him today, long before I ever went to New York, Ric had begged me to come to Charlotte. I could see what he was thinking. A lot of our matches were in St. Louis and different places. I've worked a lot of hours with Ric Flair. I could see what he was thinking.

To be real honest with you, I never thought a lot of Jimmy Crockett. The first time I met him was in St. Louis and he had the aura about him that said, "Who the hell are you?" It was a down-the-nose type of deal. I was around him a little later after that, and he wasn't so bad, but just in general.

Keller: Was it just the first impression that bothered you, or were there other things?

DiBiase: Just in general. I don't know. I can't put my finger on it.

Keller: That's saying a lot to have an opportunity to work with a good friend of yours whom you would love professionally to work with who you think you could probably make good money with, and you turned that down because of the promoter?

DiBiase: Charlotte was recognized as one of those trip territories where you had those long trips and you had to bust your butt. The other thing that bothered me, too, is you've got top guys flying in a plane and the underneath guys driving their asses off and making nothing. There was too much a difference there.

Keller: How much of a factor was Dusty Rhodes and his power-position in terms of you not wanting to work there? There was a

lot of folklore that you would never want to work with Dusty and vice-versa.

DiBiase: I never worked for Dusty. I worked with Dusty a few times. I've never had any problem with Dusty. Personally, I've heard a lot of stories. I've heard a lot of stories from people who have worked for Dusty, they're horror stories. On a personal level, we've always worked well together and we've always gotten along well on a personal level. Of course, I can't say. A lot of people who I respect have had some pretty cruel things to say about him. It's not for me to say. I can't judge Dusty as a booker or a boss, because I've never been in that position.

As far as my personal experience with him, it's always been okay. When he came to the WWF, the first time around was with me. And the last time around was with me, when he was on his way out. Dusty and I got along okay.

Keller: This is pretty hypothetical, but do you think there's a chance Ric Flair would have gotten that phone call from Vince McMahon to be the "Million Dollar Man" had you been the NWA Champion at that time?

DiBiase: Yeah, maybe. The two characters projected were a lot alike.

Keller: When it appeared obvious in the UWF that Steve Williams was going to be their main guy, was that a big part of your decision to go to Vince McMahon?

DiBiase: Steve and I are good buds. When Steve came on the scene, Bill basically gave Steve to me to groom him. I did. Bill tagged us up. We did very well together. The whole thing was, I got to a point where I was frustrated. I knew that he was new on the scene. It was like the Oklahoma football player-wrestler, all of that meant a lot and was good. Sure, push it for all that it's worth. But it got to the point where I thought I had helped groom this guy, I'm interviewing, I'm doing all of this, and he's been featured and he's been featured and he's been featured. As a matter of fact, right before I went to Japan—I went in July and when I came back from Japan, the deal had been made and Crockett was coming in.

I got with Jim Ross and Ken Mantell, who were booking for Bill, and I got them together and I said, "Look guys, you know me. I've been as loyal as anybody, but there just comes a time when you've got to speak up. I said, it's nothing personal about Doc, I love Doc, but everybody in this business has to take care of themselves. I've been on the back-burner long enough. I'm the horse out there leading the cart, pulling the cart. If me being featured is not in the cards, just tell me. I can sit at home and just do Japan."

So there was some talk about that happening and then, I don't know, I came back, I found out the scenario with Crockett was with something like Steve having the belt. That had no real

influence on it. My whole deal was, I'd go along with whatever scenario they wanted to do. That's when they started guarantees. Before, if you were the featured guy, you're gonna make more money. Now, he could be the featured guy, but if you've got a guarantee, the whole idea is how much money you're making. So, if they're going to guarantee the right money, I'll work the first match.

I was supposed to hear from Vince and a week went by and I didn't hear from him. I went and did TV in Ft. Worth. It was a TV shoot, but I worked a dark match. I said, "I'm not gonna appear on TV until I know what I'm doing here." Since I hadn't heard from Vince and I thought I was going to, I thought maybe they had changed their minds. So I shot a price at Crockett and he agreed on it. I had made a verbal commitment that I was on board with them. But I hadn't signed any contract.

I went home and the next day, I'm sitting on the back deck taking in sun, and my wife hands me the cordless phone and it's Vince McMahon. And the rest is history.

Keller: How hesitant were you to change your black glove, black tights, black boots image and become part of as you call it "Fantasy Land." Or at that point in your career was that just the next logical step?

DiBiase: I think it was just the next logical step. Every major business decision I made in wrestling, whether I already had my mind made up or not, I would always go to Terry (Funk). There were a couple of times he would say no to me. He always called me "Teddy." Anybody who knew me when I was a little kid calls me "Teddy." A couple times he changed my mind, but for the most part, I just wanted somebody to reaffirm what I was doing.

I have a lot of respect for Terry Funk in this business. Very much. As a matter of fact, I don't think there are too many people I would respect more as far as their knowledge and comprehension of business and his insight. His ability to see what's going to happen or where the business is headed. He's been phenomenal at doing that with me. I mean, he didn't know who, but when I was back in college in the early '70s, I remember him telling me that what was going to happen to wrestling was somebody was going to go with a promotion that would go nationwide, possibly worldwide, and it's not going to matter where you live. It happened. He didn't know and I didn't know who it would be, but it happened.

But anyway, what was funny, when I had the meeting with Vince, he said, "I've got an idea, an angle that's never been done, and you fit the bill." He said it's unique in that it's something that's never been done. He said, "So many things have been done and redone, but this has never been done. You're a great worker, you're

very articulate, you just have the qualifications of what I think it would take to get this thing over." I said, "Great, what is it?" He said, "I can't tell you." I said, "What?!" He said, "If I tell you and you decide not to come on board, then I'm giving away a great idea." I said, "You're right." I said, "Let me think about this for a little while." He said okay, fine.

So I went home and called Terry. Terry's funny. He said, "Teddy, if Vince McMahon, who uust drew the biggest indoor crowd in history, says he's got an idea that's never been done and he wants to make you it, pack your bags and go to New York and don't look back." I said, "Well, that's what I kind of thought." He said, "What, are you nuts? Go!" And that was it.

Keller: When you finally heard the idea, after all of the build-up, were you a little let down by it? Or did it live up to your expectations?

DiBiase: I wasn't let down at all. In my mind I was thinking, he watched me and he sees me as somebody who can pull this thing off. The key things he said were I was a great worker and I come off as smart and articulate. Right away when he said that, if I'm going to be smart and articulate, then I have to be really cocky. I said, that's the persona that I am as a heel. If you ever heard me interview before that, that was the way I interviewed. I came off as being above everybody. In the back of my mind, I had this idea, I didn't know exactly where he was going, but I wasn't surprised.

What surprised me was the extent to which he went to get it over. What's really great is when I called him and told him, "Vince, I'm on board, so what is it?" He said (laughs), "Get up here." He sent me a plane ticket and wouldn't tell me over the phone. He said, "You are going to be the Million Dollar Man. You are going to fly first class, you are going to stay at nice hotels, you are going to have a limousine waiting for you when you get off of every plane to take you to the building." I said, "I'm gonna get heat all right. I'm gonna get heat with all of the guys (other wrestlers)." Everybody understands Hogan getting all of that treatment. It was phenomenal.

Keller: How did you film the pool scene, for instance? Vince went to such an extent to keep your image realistic, even for people such as those who would see you getting into and out of a limosine at a hotel. How did you get away with doing that pool scene—where you kicked the kids out of the pool—without getting arrested?

DiBiase: We went to this pool. We got the guy and told him what we were doing.

Keller: The kids had no idea?

DiBiase: The kids knew this thing was going to be on TV and so they told the kids what we

were going to do. So they just went along with it. At the end of the deal, I was on a lounge chair. We told the kids, "We want you to hang on the fence and just be looking at the water as if you really want to be in there."

Keller: What was the process you went through to get the lady to bark like a dog or the kid who you kicked the basketball out from under?

DiBiase: The ones on the big TV shows with the platform, those were handpicked. They were aware of what was going to happen before it happened. But, the ones in every town, the ones every night at the regular house shows where there was no TV and I would get in the ring and say I had 300 dollars for somebody and all you gotta do is "kiss my stinkin' feet" or "crawl across the ring on your belly," whatever silly thing it was I could think of to make them do, those were real (laughs)! I proved every night that everybody had a price.

Keller: Did you feel good about being that, for lack of better term, mean to people or did you see it as all in fun, part of the show? Did you ever take it too far?

DiBiase: I never humiliated somebody to the point where it was horribly embarrassing. Well... (laughs). No really. The worst one that I can't imagine anyone doing, after wrestling for 20 minutes, was me taking off my boot and my sock and someone actually kissing my feet. But those people were as excited about getting into the ring and being there as they were about getting the money.

Keller: At your first few arena appearances, didn't you give money away to ringiders to show arrogance, but it backfired and fans cheered you?

DiBiase: Yeah, at the beginning. After all the build-up, after all the vignettes and everything, the pool scene and all that stuff, the first TVs I did, Vince wanted me going down to ringside with handfuls of money throwing it at their feet to get them to grovel for my money. The fans said, "Hey, this guy's giving away money." (laughs) That was one TV. That was LaCross, Wisconsin. The next day in Madison, Wisconsin it was a different story (and we didn't give money away anymore). I won't forget that because I was depressed. We thought, "My gosh, this isn't going to get over."

Keller: How did you achieve the longevity on top that has been approached by only a few in the WWF, such as Roddy Piper and Randy Savage? Were there keys to that? Was it just not falling into too many ruts along the way?

DiBiase: You fall into ruts where you get into patterns of doing things, but it's any given situation, any given program I would get into,

whatever the match called for, it was the ability to go out. If you're the heel, you've got to do something to create the issue. Some underhanded thing, me buying someone. Like the deal where I turned Bossman babyface. I told Bossman I was afraid to put my hand in the snakebag to get my belt. So I hired Bossman to do it and then I degraded him. Bossman said, "To hell with you." I almost had the belt in my hands and he pulls it away and says to hell with me. He puts the belt back in the bag and says no one talks to him like that. He said, "I can't be bought." So he's humiliated me. So the next week on TV while he's wrestling some schmo, I jump in and beat the dog out of him to create that issue. Now we've created the reason why there's the issue between me and the Bossman. Now we're going to go around to all the arenas in the country and have this match.

Well, naturally, the people want to see Bossman kick my butt. From there, it depends if you're going to go around one time or are you going to go around a couple of times. If you're going to go around a couple of times, you don't want to give them everything the first time. So the first time, you've got to figure out a way where I had beaten him. If I'm going to beat him and he's the favorite guy, during most of that match it goes to him and I'm gonna look like I'm trying to get the hell out of there. Then right at the last second, whatever happens, when it's obvious to everybody he's got me beat, I screw him and go off laughing.

If it comes time for me to put him over, he's gonna get his revenge, and he's gonna win the match, then 80 percent of that match is going to be mine. I'm gonna have him at my mercy.

The other aspect of it is how you do it, how you handle each given situation without burying yourself. My gimmick was endless, there are so many things you can do with that character. I may not be through yet.

Keller: Is one of the things that your character could do is turn babyface? Was that ever seriously considered and would you want to do that?

DiBiase: I don't know. I could, sure. Anything can happen. I could go bankrupt and see the light.

Keller: Was that ever talked about?

DiBiase: Vince just off the top of his head said, "Ted, there are so many things we can do with this character and when we run out of things to do, then we'll just turn ya'." There's just so many things you can do.

Keller: In your last days, you did something few heels could do—especially after all of your years in the WWF—and that is turn a heavily pushed heel into a babyface, in this case Razor Ramon.

The worst one that I can't imagine anyone doing, after wrestling for 20 minutes, was me taking off my boot and my sock and someone actually kissing my feet. But those people were just excited about getting into the ring.

DiBiase: Yep. (laughs) Hopefully... well, what we're talking about now is possibly, if I'm not going to be in the ring, the "Million Dollar Man" is certainly a character who could easily step into a managerial role, not so much as a manager, but the man with bucks who is pushing the big guns. Timing's everything. It depends on where the company stands, what's going on at the time. Anything you do like that, anything's a good idea if you know when to do it.

Keller: When you first arrived in the WWF, were you taken aback by the level of professionalism. That seems to be the one common thread with everyone when they go there.

DiBiase: Very much so. Here I was, I had been in the business and seen a lot of TVs. The first time I showed up at their TV production, I was in awe. There were all of these trucks around, and you think they're setting up for some big rock show or something. I was just taken aback by the level of it. And just watching the way the show was produced and the quality of the show and what went into the production. I had gone from studio wrestling to ABC Wide World of Sports level. It was incredible.

Keller: Did you sense a different attitude among the wrestlers in how they looked at themselves as professionals and how they approached the business? Was it different than even the Mid-South during the same era?

DiBiase: Not so much. No, I don't think so. Some of the guys, maybe, but you still have to remember the business is the business and you are who you are.

Keller: Is one of the things you disagreed with Vince McMahon on the level of effort that was put forth at every day arena show that in some ways made the arena events not seem

I don't care what any critic says about Hulk's working ability. He's a lot better worker than most critics give him credit for. You're talking to one of the technical wrestlers, one of the guys who knows... People say he's terrible, he didn't deserve it. He deserved everything he made.

special in terms of how hard the wrestlers seemed to be working?

DiBiase: When you're making great money and things are flying really good, it's a lot easier to get up and excited and motivated and give it your all. It's a lot easier to do it when you know you're going to get 10 or 15 grand instead of one. It wasn't a matter of Vince stressing or not stressing them. When you're doing TV, you know it's TV. You know how important TV is and you know that the boss is there. Anytime you're in that situation, you're going to do all you can to do your best. Plus, your TV shows are going to look better sometimes simply because if there's something they don't like they can edit it out.

When you're on the road, you're in a different city each night. I don't care who you are or how dedicated you are. It's hard to get up every night and do it. It's just hard. There are so many factors that play into that. Are you having a bad day, are you sick, are you having problems at home. There are so many factors that can have an effect on how good or bad a match is. The understanding from all the top guys is: When you're doing TV, that's your bread and butter.

Keller: All that said, could there have been more stress on putting on better matches, or is that just unrealistic given the schedule?

DiBiase: Given the schedules, that would be hard. Sure, though, it's always expected of you. That's the agent's job to watch the matches and make sure the guy's not sitting on his butt. But there are just some times when you've got to

give a guy a break. "Hey, we were stranded at such and such a town at an airport for six hours, we got on the last flight, got into town, and we got in the rent a car, we pulled up in front of the building and the show started at 8 o'clock and you're throwing your stuff on and you're exhausted before you ever go out in the ring. How can an agent yell at you if you gave less than perfection. It was never that (workrate) was never stressed.

Keller: Because of those extenuating circumstances, do you think the rating of matches on a star-basis is unfair because the critic doesn't know what the background was coming into the match?

DiBiase: I haven't thought about that much, but many factors can play into it. At the same time, some of the guys—I've had matches and I can look at some of those things and see where some of my matches were rated and all my matches weren't always rated excellent. Some of them were even bad. Most of the time, I agreed. I knew why. Overall, I think most people who follow wrestling closely that get the newsletters, I can't think there were too many times they went to see me where I didn't bust my ass for them. The other thing, too, is you can have a very, very bad match and it's not your fault at all. A great deal of that depends on what's on the other side of the ring looking at you. There are times when you give me this situation and you want me to make chicken salad out of chicken sh-t. Sorry, can't do it.

Keller: Was there a feeling among wrestlers in the WWF that Hulk Hogan was carrying them to the levels that the WWF reached or did everyone feel a significant part of that significant formula?

DiBiase: I don't know. I guess different guys felt differently. I think every major player felt they were a part of it and they contributed to the deal. I think everybody realized that Hulk was the golden goose. He was the guy at the right place at the right time who got the superpush.

I don't care what any critic says about Hulk's working ability. He's a lot better worker than most critics give him credit for. You're talking to one of the technical wrestlers, one of the guys who knows. Every scenario is different, every situation is different. If you saw Hulk wrestle in Japan, you wouldn't see the same guy. I mean, he can go. It's the character and it's the situation. I mean, he got the job done. Nobody can deny. People say he's terrible, he didn't deserve it. He deserved everything he made. I mean, the guy's got unreal charisma. He'd get on the mic and just go.

Keller: One of the legitimate criticisms of Hogan as the history books are written might be that, compared to other sports or movie superstars, when he left the industry, he left it

in much worse shape than when he entered. Thanksgiving of the year he entered the sport, there were dozens of sellout crowds and TV ratings were higher and a lot more wrestlers were making full-time livings. When he left, there were two big promotions with fewer wrestlers working full time. That's not necessarily Hogan's fault, but in terms of being a great asset to his sport, he was great during his own era, but he left the sport in worse shape.

DiBiase: I understand what you're saying, but it's not fair to blame him for that. Hogan might have been the single reason it achieved its super success, with other variables keeping the company down that weren't his fault at all. Just the nature of the involvement had a lot to do with it.

For Vince to go out and create the monster company he did, he had to pull all this great talent from around the country. For it to become the monster that it did and for it to achieve the success it did, pretty soon the smaller companies folded because they couldn't compete with the look of the WWF. That's not Hulk Hogan's fault. That has nothing to do with him. But as a result of those companies folding, as a result of there not being a grooming ground anymore, the young guys who enter the business who normally would have gone to the Tennessees and the Mid-Souths and Floridas and Georgias and wrestled on a regional basis and polished their skills, and then headed for a New York or a Charlotte, they don't have those places to go anymore. Or they're out working these independent shows trying to develop the skills in an atmosphere where they don't have any leadership. There's no Jake Roberts or Bret Hart working on a local level with those guys to say, "Hey, you're not doing this right. This is the way it needs to be done." It's like the blind leading the blind. Until they get into a bigger place, they won't learn. Hulk Hogan has nothing to do with that.

Keller: Do you think today the wrestling industry is in worse shape than it's ever been in?

DiBiase: Today? No, I've seen it a lot worse.

Keller: At what point has it been worse and in what way?

DiBiase: Just overall, I can remember when I got in, there was always a place or two that was doing well, like Florida would do pretty consistent business and then Charlotte came up for a while, then cooled down, then it got red-hot again. Then there was a time in an interim where Georgia was really hot. Then it died. Then that area, Mid-South, it was really hot when I first went in there. It was really big. Then it cooled off and never died. Then when JYD came on the scene it took off and it was probably one of the best, surpassing even

Charlotte for a while. Regionally, there was always some place that was doing really good. You could always name one or two, but there were a lot more offices. I can't remember any time in my career when all of them were doing great business at the same time.

Keller: So you're not hitting the panic-button like a lot of people are?

DiBiase: In a way I am. For me to be sitting here and talking to you and saying that it's a well-known fact that my business is sports entertainment, I would have never dreamed I'd have an interview like that. It was sacrilegious. But what am I going to do? Insult everybody's intelligence? It's a known fact. Everybody knows. There's no denying, there's no guessing, there's nobody saying "this is real and this isn't." Everybody knows that wrestling is entertainment. Everybody knows. Now it's a matter of what you do with that. So, in a way you hit the panic button because if there's no mystery anymore, there's no doubt anymore to how real or not it is, then what do you do with the same old game to continue to make it exciting and different. So, yes, there is a reason to hit the panic-button.

Keller: Did you use steroids during your run in the WWF? Are you open about that subject?

DiBiase: Let's put it this way, in 18 years of being a wrestler, there was a time when I did experiment with them briefly.

Keller: How long is briefly?

DiBiase: (laughs) You can... Just look at Ted DiBiase. When you look at me, you know right away, I wasn't a star of the WWF or a star anywhere because I had a great body.

Keller: Was there any peer pressure to use steroids in your years?

DiBiase: None. I mean, if there was peer pressure, you put it on yourself. I mean, I think it was all just individual attitude. I think I could have stressed how I looked more than I did. But as I was young coming in, what was told to me was, "You're a wrestler. You're not a bodybuilder." If you go look at real wrestlers, amateur wrestlers you don't see any great big chiselled bodies, bodybuilder bodies. You see athletes. You see well-conditions, slim-trim, most of them agile and muscled, but not overdeveloped. There were times when I took pretty good care of myself and there were times when I didn't. It depends on what other qualities you had. The qualities that got me there were my ability to work and my ability to talk. My ability to be a charismatic person, to be that character and protect that character where I didn't need the body as much, as much as the other guys did.

As far as peer pressure, people saying you need to do this or you're inferior because you didn't take them, no—that was and always has been an individual choice.

That's why, and you're not asking the question, but I'm gonna go ahead and say it, but that's why I think this crap with the federal government indictments is just that, a bunch of crap. To me, it's an injustice. Vince McMahon has admitted he tried steroids. A lot of wrestlers, whether they wanted it known or not, admitted they tried it. You're going back to a time when it was not illegal. It was not classified up there as a controlled substance like cocaine.

Keller: In specific states where steroids were sent, using steroids was by state law illegal dating further back than the federal law.

DiBiase: Okay, but my whole point is there are a lot of athletes who have tried it. And more so in really, really competitive sports where if you don't take steroids, you won't be able to compete. If you want to jump on it, Uncle Sam, why aren't you knocking on the door of the NFL? Why aren't you knocking on the door of the NBA? Or professional bodybuilding? Who puts those shows on? Who sponsors all of those shows? Who pays all of those people who are posing? You think those guys are all clean? Give me a break. I've heard about some of the policies. They say they're drug testing. Yeah, sure, they go, "Okay guys, you're going to have a test six months from now on this day." Who can't get by that one? Well, let's see, if I stop here, it will be out of my system and I will be okay." Come on.

Keller: A couple of questions based on what you've been saying. In your personal opinion—indictments notwithstanding—whether Vince McMahon knew it or not, do you believe there was an atmosphere in the WWF that rewarded, if not encouraged and condoned, steroid use among certain wrestlers who didn't have what it took to get by otherwise? And did Vince McMahon reward those employees who didn't have what it took to get by otherwise because of their size?

DiBiase: Wow. (long pause) I don't think it was encouraged.

Keller: Was it rewarded...

DiBiase: Wait. I'll give you a personal example. When I came back and my thing kicked off, one thing that was very obvious to me and to Vince was that I had gotten out of shape. Vince told me, "Ted, I want you to get back in the gym. Everything's good, but I want you to be visible in the gym. Lose the gut and get back in the gym and on the weights." Now, there came a point when, you know, after getting into shape and looking around me and

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seeing how there were so many bodies in the business, I thought gosh I'd do pretty well on this. Then you talk to guys who say if you take just a little bit of this and a little bit of that, you know, you'll really trim up and start ripping out. I'm thinking, you get that same mentality. Well if I do just a little bit, I'll look that much better.

I was walking by Vince one day at a TV or something. He made a remark to me, "Hey, you're trimming down, Ted. You're looking good." I said something to the effect that, "Yeah, if I got on a little gas, think what I could do." He looked right at me and said, "You don't need that." This is the guy, he said this point blank. I'm his top guy, I'm his top heel. He said, "You don't need that."

Keller: Let me counter. You've taken a pretty strong stance defending him in the words you used to describe the indictment—and maybe justifiably so—but did he reward people who weren't as talented or experienced as you were because—not because of—but they were taking steroids and that's the reason they got the rewards? Was that part of the atmosphere of the WWF, not for people as talented as you, but people who filled a different slot, a different need or want?

DiBiase: Okay. I don't think it has anything to do with... Okay, you take somebody who has a good body and that's part of what he's bringing to the table—that body, that look—well, that's very marketable. The Ultimate Warrior had a great body. That body and that look was marketable, and therefore he was given a position. The fact that he was on or wasn't on steroids wasn't the reason. Again, we're not talking about the NFL, we're talking about a business, entertainment, looking good for your business. Do you think any of the owners or coaches in the NFL don't know that

they've got players who are on the stuff. You can look at them and know. Was Vince guilty of looking the other way? Maybe.

Keller: One of the major two items of the indictment as I have read it is precedent setting, and that is to hold McMahon legally culpable for creating an atmosphere at a time when they were illegal that rewarded its use. That's the possibly precedent-setting part of the indictment that is less clear cut.

DiBiase: No, no.

Keller: Here's another example. I'm playing devil's advocate a little bit here. He announced he was going to steroid test (on August 23, 1991). Then for three months he didn't steroid test. And the day that "Entertainment Tonight" and "Inside Edition" were both planning to run pieces announcing that Vince McMahon three months earlier held a press conference announcing steroid testing, and they were going to announce he still hadn't tested, that was the day they conducted tests for steroids the first time. He sent a memo to "Inside Edition" and "Entertainment Tonight" to stop them from running their stories. So that scenario, if indeed that is true, then it would appear Vince McMahon was dragged kicking and screaming into steroid testing. Now a general question based on that specific instance: Do you think Vince McMahon should have steroid tested earlier, for public relations sake if nothing else? As bad as the NFL testing may be, they were testing long before McMahon.

DiBiase: It may have been. Then again, you might think if he had made an announcement to all of his people, "I'm gonna start steroid testing. So get ready for this. I'm gonna give you a little time to get off of the stuff, then we're going to start testing. Then each time we test you, the level better drop or you're in trouble." I don't know what Vince was thinking. Again, the only thing I could find him guilty of would be maybe looking the other way.

My gosh, how many bodybuilding pose-downs are on every year? Who sponsors those shows. Who's responsible for those athletes? Who's looking the other way there?

Keller: This point has been brought up with me and members of the mainstream press...

DiBiase: I've gotta interject something. You know why mainstream sports people are so critical of the WWF? Because of its tremendous success.

Keller: And they don't understand it.

DiBiase: Exactly. They don't understand it. People don't like and people are afraid of something they don't understand. I trap people all the time who say something about me being a wrestler. They say they don't watch wrestling, yet if you let them talk long enough, they hang

themselves? What you find out is they're closet fans. They don't want to admit to anybody that they're actually entertained by watching it. Because it's not real or it's a kids thing, they don't want to admit it. They don't understand the appeal. The appeal is very simple. It's very simple logic. It's good versus evil in a competitive way, a soap opera type way, where the bad is going to do something to get the one up on the good, but ultimately the good is gonna win.

Keller: With incredible athleticism thrown in.

DiBiase: Now, can you say that about the motion picture industry today? No. Hell no. If the bad guy can get away with it, more power to him. It's applauded. Shoot him up, cut him up. One of the biggest compliments I ever got was from Wilford Brimley. That's what he said. He said, "What you guys do is one of the few things left on television where you have genuine role models. It's very simple, it's black and white, it's good versus evil, and ultimate good is gonna win." They make such a big deal out of Vince's deal with the Gulf War going on and bringing on the Saddam Hussein type guy. You know.

Keller: Sure, when troops were still in the Gulf?

DiBiase: But I found that being really stupid. Because if you understand, if you take time to watch and understand, instead of just watching one show and going, "Hey, that's a mockery!" What did he do ultimately? Ultimately, the U.S.A. came out flying high and buried this guy.

Keller: I have to say I was one of the people who didn't tune in just once. I tuned in every week and I was also saying I thought it was tasteless because here's a guy whose intent isn't to make American look good, his intent is to make money. And he's making money off of the emotions that are stirred from citizens of his own country dying while a legitimate war is going on. If two years passed, that's another thing. And time has passed if you look back on stuff like this in history. I don't think in the history of wrestling on a large scale there was a situation quite like this where role models admittedly were going out there for entertainment purposes fictionally to fight evil that is created for the sake of making money. That's where that other argument is. I can see your side, but I also think there is a legitimate other side.

DiBiase: Yeah, I can see that, too. I can.

Keller: Just a little while ago you brought up one of my points inadvertently when you said pro wrestling is one of the few sports where there are role models left. Let's take what you just said there and apply it to the other argument about steroids in wrestling. And that is, in football, they're wearing pads

and there's a legitimate competitive advantage to getting bigger, and that's how you get on a team. There should be testing much stricter than it is. But football is not aimed at little kids and there are no kids out there watching football saying, "Wow, I want to be like him" in terms of his chest size or arm size to the degree that there was and is in professional wrestling. "Be like Hulk Hogan. Take your vitamins and you'll be like me." That type of role model situation and that Vince openly targeted kids with his merchandising—the merchandising of individuals, not teams like the NFL does—is a big difference. So when you take that factor and look at the individuals he was promoting and now those individuals have come out and admitted they were taking steroids, for Vince to turn the other cheek, at least ethically seems somewhat lacking when he knows there are little kids out there looking at people who they are admiring partially because of their builds and Vince is promoting them because of their builds, or at least that's part of what they brought to the table—what made them, not wrestlers, but superstars—then you have to wonder should Vince have turned the other cheek. If he's so intelligent that he took wrestling national and international and drew the biggest indoor crowd in history, shouldn't he have been smart enough to pick up on the fact that maybe there was some illegal or unhealthy at least—because no one should deny they knew they were unhealthy in the '80s—activity going on with his role models?

That's the counter argument to, "Why doesn't the government fry bigger fish first?" like the NFL. The second element of that argument, which is much shorter, is if I get stopped for speeding, I can't tell the police officer, "Hey, look at that car that just passed us. It's going 70, I was going 68." He's not going to say, "Oh, well, sure let me go take care of him first." First come first served doesn't necessarily go in the order of the severity of the crime.

DiBiase: I'm not saying I don't think they're saying...

Keller: I'm trying to present the other side of the argument that I've heard because you really felt strongly about one side. Does that make it at least seem like people on the other side of the argument are at least thinking? They're not just trying to take Vince down for no reason, out of jealousy or lack of knowledge.

DiBiase: I have heard through the rumor mill, and I never heard who, I've just heard that the whole deal is a personal thing. Some person or some thing in particular wanting to take, in particular, Vince McMahon.

Keller: If that's the case, that's wrong. No question about it.

DiBiase: Again, that's just a rumor that's been out there a long time. That's why I get upset, because they're focusing on this guy and

again, all I can say is if he's guilty of something, it's turning the other cheek. Or maybe, like you're saying, maybe he should have jumped on it sooner. Again, you're talking about a guy who is going 20 different directions at one time. Maybe it took a while for it to sink in to where he finally realized that, hey, this is getting out of hand. I've got to do something. I was there for the meetings when he finally said, "Look guys, this is what we've got to do." And he laid down the law. "This is what we've got to do and this is the way we've got to go." And if you screw up, whatever it was, six weeks and you try again, and three strikes you're out, whatever.

Keller: What about Hulk Hogan saying on Arsenio Hall he never took steroids?

DiBiase: Mistake. He would tell you that.

Keller: That fueled the fire. I think most people agree that the story might have died otherwise.

DiBiase: He was afraid of damning his image. It wasn't that he blatantly said no. He said it was done strictly for medicinal purposes was the statement. He would tell you himself if he had it to do over again, he would have come clean right there and said, "Look, I made a mistake." At no time was it ever meant for any kids to know. It was never the intent to push, like, the picture you're trying to get across to the kids was never, "Do steroids and look like this."

Keller: A final question. In all of your years with McMahon, overall, do you believe you were treated fairly?

DiBiase: People say look at all the money McMahon has made compared to what you've made. Look, yeah, sure, there's probably been times when I could say, "Yeah, I think I should have made more for this and I should have made more for that." But, well, I'm one of the guys. I have no idea what his expenses are. I probably can't even fathom what it costs him to operate that machine on a daily basis. I'm sure it's a lot. But at the same time, the bottom line is, whether he should have paid me more at some point in time, whether I should have made a lot more or a little more, what I did make I have to thank him for. The opportunity to become that character, to have the spinoffs that I've enjoyed from that notoriety, I would have never made that kind of money and had the kind of success I've had had it not been for what happened in the WWF and going in there as the "Million Dollar Man."

There are a lot of guys who will jump on a bandwagon and try to persecute somebody. I'm not gonna name names. I'm not that kind of guy. But some of them may read it and they know who they are. There are a lot of guys who jump on the bandwagon, and it's sour grapes. When you get into this business, you get out of it what you put into it. You know the pitfalls going in or

you lose them fast enough. Okay, we don't have a union. We don't have a lot of benefits that the average Joe has working for an employer. We buy our own health insurance. There is no retirement fund unless you fund your own. If you get hurt, sometimes it gets paid for, sometimes you pay for it yourself. But you know all this going in. So if you're not happy with it, don't stay in. When the run is over, when you've made the best run at it you can, you've got what you've got.

But when it's all over, I've seen too many people get out bitter because they think the business still owes them something or think that Vince still owes them something. If you weren't happy with it when you were there, you shouldn't have been there.

Keller: As long as no promises were made?

DiBiase: Exactly. So why be bitter about it when it's over? Some guys aren't recognizing when it is over. Like, you say, "Gosh, I worked for you for all of these years and you can't give me a job?" Well, unfortunately, it's like professional sports. Usually, when you work for a company, the longer you're there the more valuable you are to them. Well, that's true to a degree in this business, and then after you get to a certain age, it's not. You have a window there where you gotta make it and get out. If you haven't prepared for life after wrestling, if you haven't saved anything, if you haven't worked toward another job, if you haven't prepared yourself, how can you blame the promoter?

The promoter says up front this is what I want you to do and this is what I'm going to give you to do it. It's kind of like, well I don't want to preach here, but it's kind of like the old parable in the Bible where Jesus told the story about the guy saying, "Well, I'm going to give you this much and you this much and you this much. And he pays them this. Then late in the day, this guy comes on and instead of working eight hours, he works one. And Jesus pays him the same money. And they're all mad because they worked all day and got paid the same. He said, "Did you not agree to work for what I offered you?" He said, "Yes." "So, what's your complaint? It's my money to give, we agreed. We had an agreement that this is what you'd accept for the job, right? So if I agree with this other guy to pay him the same for half the work, that's between him and me."

I feel a lot of that. I'm not just referring to Vince and guys being bitter with Vince. I'm mean guys just bitter with the business in general. There are some guys—again, I won't mention names—who were big names in this business as I was coming up in the ranks, who I had respect for, who I admired and looked up to. And since that time have lost that respect for that very reason. They became bitter because the business passed them by. Maybe they

All I can say is if Vince McMahon is guilty of something, it's turning the other cheek. Or maybe he should have jumped on it sooner. You're talking about a guy who is going 20 different directions at one time. Maybe it took a while for it to sink in to where he finally realized that, "Hey, this is getting out of hand. I've got to do something."

thought the business was never going to get any bigger than it was when they were the star. Or nobody would ever be as big a star or nobody could possibly be a bigger star than they were. And then along came Hulk Hogan. And who knows, everybody's going now, I can't imagine anybody being as big or bigger than Hogan, but who are we to say it won't happen again. It could very easily happen again. Maybe not in my lifetime, but it could happen again. The whole point is, why be bitter? This business afforded you a living. And a very good living for a lot of these guys. It gave them everything they have, yet they want to come back now and knock it. Sure it's not like it used to be. Sure it's different, but everything evolves. With football, sure it's still blocking and tackling, but you watch a tape from 20 years ago and you watch a tape of the SuperBowl that was just played, and there's a big difference. It's the same game, but it's not the same game. Everything evolves. I would agree some of the basics need to be gone back to, but that's growing pains. You reach out there and grab ahold of something. Do you think any one of those guys who are so bitter now, who thinks the wrestling business owes them something or thinks that Vince McMahon or Ted Turner or whoever the promoter is owes them something—do you think for one minute had one of those guys had the insight, had they had the genius, the marketing genius or the guts—just the guts—to attempt what Vince McMahon did? I'm not saying I totally agree with everything that was done. I had my share of

arguments. I kept hearing, "That's old school, old school, old school." I'd go, "Old school works in a lot of ways." But still I take my hat off to Vince. I told this to Vince personally. "You took this business to a level nobody else has been able to. You gave it more recognition nationwide and worldwide than it's ever had." Any one of those guys who are saying he killed the business or whatever it is they say, do you think if they had the opportunity to do the same thing and make that kind of money and they were able to be the one, don't you think they would have done it. They make it this moral deal, like "I would never do that. What he ultimately did is kill the business." Do you think any one of them wouldn't have done it.

Keller: A lot of them would have done it differently, but they would have done it.

DiBiase: Exactly.

Keller: What was the perception of Vince McMahon among wrestlers? Was he more of an office promoter than others you worked for?

DiBiase: I wouldn't know how to answer that. We all worked for the same guy, but everybody's got their own attitude, their own perception. Their own experiences with the guy.

Keller: Let me ask you this, then. Compared to other promoters, was he more hands-on with the wrestlers or were there more middle-men with him and the wrestlers?

DiBiase: Vince was right on top of his business. That's why Vince McMahon was so successful and has been so successful. That's why Bill Watts was so successful. He wasn't sitting up in the office delegating all of his power to make decisions to anybody else. That's one of the reasons I say I can't see how the man's done it. A few things are delegated to people, but when it comes right down to the major decisions and even the minor decisions, nothing goes unless he okays it. I don't know how the man has spread himself around that much.

As far as being hands-on personable with the guys, usually you didn't see him. The only time you saw Vince was at TV. If you needed to talk to him, he would find time to talk to you. He would point-blank tell everybody: "You got a grievance, a problem, don't go to an agent, don't go to Pat. Be a man. If you've got a problem, go to the man."

When I blew out my knee one time, he covered the hospital bills and sent me a card and flowers—he didn't, but the company did. Maybe at the time business was so good he could afford to do it. I don't know. I guarantee ya', if I had blown my knee out and I called Bill Watts and told Bill I was going to be out for two weeks and I'm having knee surgery, he wouldn't have said, "Send me the bill." He would not, as a company, have sent me flowers.

Vince McMahon did. Both knees. Of course again, at the time I was the top dog. In other words, at the time it happened, there was a sizable investment in me and my character, where it was very much to Vince's benefit to take care of me. I'm not saying he wouldn't have anyway, but I'm trying to be really objective there. I don't want some of the other wrestlers sitting there reading this saying, "Oh, god, listen to this."

Keller: Did you sense a lot of wrestlers in the WWF felt some sense of resentment toward the way they were treated? Was there a little of that?

DiBiase: Anytime. The boys are the boys and the boys are never always happy. There's always going to be something that they're not happy about, whether it's the trips where they're making us drive too far, or we're on the road too long. And I'm not excluding myself. I don't care who you work for, you're never always happy with the boss. It's like anything else. When the company's doing good and those nice fat checks are coming in every week, you're not going to bitch as much about 20 days on the road or about not seeing your family as much. Then you look at it. I didn't get home much, but I was making great money. The great money was the compensation, the justification.

Keller: Did you ever look at Vince McMahon differently because he had never been in the ring as most promoters had? Or did that never cross your mind?

DiBiase: I can't think of anything specifically, but there have been times when I would question an idea or a way he wanted to do something or what he thought the effects should be, something along that nature, and I would say to myself, "He doesn't understand only because he's never been in the ring." I will say on the back side of that—I'm trying to be objective here—there have been times when I've also said, "That's never gonna work" or actually getting mad, saying, "What in the hell is he doing. Why is he doing that? Thinking it would never work. And it did." It's been more than once that he's surprised me. That's life, that's business.

Keller: If there was one thing you could change about the way Vince McMahon conducted business in your years there, what would that be?

DiBiase: Vince is one of those guys who's always reaching out there. That's his nature. If I could change one thing, I would look back and say, "Vince, stay focused on what got you there." I wouldn't have gotten him off so far into the sideline things, the movie, the WBF, these things took his mind and his attention off of the thing that got him there. That's me. I'm not Vince. I don't live in his shoes and in his mind. There's a lot I don't know. That's just me as one of the boys. I'm on the outside of the office

looking in.

Now, if I were inside the office, if I were dealing with the wrestling business on a day to day basis the way he's had to do, I've had many people tell me, "Ted, once you take those tights off and you step into the office"—and I've been told there's opportunity for me there, too—"it becomes a whole new business." You look at it in a totally different light. Perhaps he sees things. Who knows. Maybe this thing we're all scared of, maybe Vince saw the fact that he was going to do something about getting new talent to keep things fresh, to keep things exciting. Well, maybe he was thinking the WBF would be something to help carry the WWF along. Or replace the WWF. I don't know. I really don't know. It's not really for me to criticize. Just as an outsider, as one of the guys, being there and going, "Gosh, he's so busy all the time." I could see the quality going down.

When I first came in, I could see the quality of how demanding he was for perfection of certain things. I can give you an example. You know when you're watching the show and the little ten second spot comes up, the inset promo during the match for 10 or 15 seconds talking about the guy who's in the ring. Vince used to do those himself. I mean, you would do them over and over and over until you got it just the way he wanted it. It got to where he got so busy, he had to delegate that to somebody else. He still wanted it a certain way. But little things like that, when he got off onto other things, there were things about the wrestling business that weren't as polished as they were before. So I'm thinking, as one of the boys, Vince should maybe have stayed home a little more and remembered the horse that's pulling the cart. I certainly can't stand in judgement because there's no way I could have done what Vince McMahon has done. I wouldn't even venture to think I would have the energy, the mind, or the drive. The man is clearly driven. I don't care whether or not you like him, he's driven. He's got big ones (laughs). For what he's done, and taking the risks—I wasn't here, but I was told (early on) he was on the razor's edge. It could have gone either way. He could have lost it all or it could have gone big time, and it went big time.

Well, you've really got to stick your neck out to accomplish that. You have to take your hat off to a guy who's willing to do that. That's why I don't want to stand in judgement. But the guys who just knock him and knock him and knock him, and say, "You've destroyed the business, you did that, you did this, he's a bum." Who are they to talk? What risk did they take? Did they have the guts to attempt what he attempted? He put it all on the line. How could you love the business more than that?

1993 TORCH YEARBOOK APPENDIX

Major Events in the United States

The following is a listing of all WCW Clashes, WCW pay-per-views, and WWF pay-per-views during 1993, plus approximations of buyrates and attendance, star ratings, and Torch reader META poll results. Also listed are key house shows from ECW, AAA, USWA, and SMW.

WCW Clash of the Champions Jan. 13—Live TBS Special Milwaukee, Wisc.—The Mecca

Cactus Jack beat Johnny B. Badd (*), Too Cold Scorpio beat Scotty Flamingo (**1/4), Chris Benoit beat Brad Armstrong (***), The Wrecking Crew beat Tom Zenk & Johnny Gunn (*1/2), Rick Steamboat & Shane Douglas (champs) beat Brian Pillman & Steve Austin by DQ to retain the WCW/NWA Tag Team Titles (****), and Sting & Dustin Rhodes beat Barry Windham & Vader & Paul Orndorff in a cage (**3/4).

Statistics: TV rating: 2.9, live attendance 4,000 (1,500 paid); Torch poll results: 6.4 (average reader score), Steamboat & Douglas vs. Austin & Pillman (best match), Jack vs. Badd (worst match), although "none" outvoted Jack vs. Badd by 4%).

WWF Royal Rumble Jan. 24—Pay-Per-View Sacramento, Calif.—Arco Arena

Rick & Scott Steiner defeated The Beverly Brothers in 10:46 when Scott pinned Blake (**1/2), Shawn Michaels pinned Marty Jannetty at 14:10 (****1/4), Bam Bam Bigelow pinned Big Bossman at 9:50 (**3/4), Bret Hart defeated Razor Ramon via submission at 17:58 (***1/4), "Narcissist" Lex Luger debuted by being introduced by Bobby Heenan, and Yokozuna won the royal rumble at 66:35 (order of elimination: Papa Shango, Brian Nobbs, Max Moon, Ric Flair, Skinner, Jerry Lawler, Virgil, Mr. Perfect, Samu, Tenryu, Terry Taylor, Koko B. Ware, Ted DiBiase, Berserker, Undertaker, Typhoon, Damien Demento, Fatu, I.R.S., Tatanka, Carlos Colon, Earthquake, Tito Santana, Jerry Sags, Owen Hart, Repoman, Rick Martel, Bob Backlund, and Randy Savage).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.2%; live attendance 16,000 (sellout, \$187,000); Torch poll results: 6.4 (avg. reader score), Michaels vs. Jannetty (best match), Bossman vs. Bigelow (worst match).

WCW SuperBrawl Feb. 21—Pay-Per-View Ashville, N.C.—Civic Center

Steve Austin & Brian Pillman defeated Marcus Bagwell & Erik Watts at 16:35 when Pillman pinned Austin (*), Too Cold Scorpio pinned Chris Benoit in 18:46 (***1/2), Cactus Jack pinned Paul Orndorff at 12:18 in a falls count anywhere match (****), The Rock & Roll Express defeated The Heavenly Bodies when Gibson pinned Prichard at 13:16 (***3/4), Dustin Rhodes (champ) defeated Maxx Payne by DQ in 11:38 in a U.S. Title defense (*), Ric Flair made his return to WCW with a live interview, Barry Windham pinned Great Muta to capture the NWA World Heavyweight Title at 24:08 (**), and Big Van Vader defeated Sting in a strap match at 20:57 (****1/2).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5; live attendance 6,500 (6,200 paid, \$55,000); Torch poll results: 7.8 (avg. reader score), Sting vs. Vader (best match), Rhodes vs. Payne (worst match).

SMW Bluegrass Brawl Apr. 2—Annual Major Arena Show Pikeville, Ky.—Pikeville College

Robbie Eagle pinned Rip Rogers (*), The Mongolian Stomper beat Rob Morgan (1/4*), Tim Horner beat The Night Stalker (**1/2), Brian Lee beat Kevin Sullivan (***), Tracy Smothers beat Dirty White Boy (****), The Heavenly Bodies beat The Stud Stable and The Rock & Roll Express in a three-way tag match (****).

Statistics: (match ratings by K.C. O'Connor), live attendance 2,000 (sellout, \$14,000).

WWF Wrestlemania IX

Apr. 4—Pay-Per-View

Las Vegas, Nev.—Caesar's Palace

Tatanka defeated Shawn Michaels by countout at

17:45 (***1/4), Rick & Scott Steiner defeated The Head Shrinkers when Scott pinned Fatu at 13:20 (**1/2), Razor Ramon pinned Bob Backlund at 3:43 (DUD), Money Inc. (Ted DiBiase & I.R.S.) defeated Hulk Hogan & Brutus Beefcake by DQ at 17:30 (**), Lex Luger pinned Mr. Perfect at 10:54 (***1/4), Undertaker defeated Giant Gonzales by DQ at 7:08 (1/2*), Yokozuna pinned Bret Hart (champ) at 8:54 to capture the WWF Title (**1/2), and Hulk Hogan pinned Yokozuna to capture the WWF Title in an impromptu title match at 0:20 (NR).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 2.0; live attendance 15,045 (\$1.1 million); Torch poll results: 3.7, Michaels vs. Tatanka (best match), Backlund vs. Ramon (worst match).

WCW Slamboree May 23—Pay-Per-View Atlanta, Ga.—The Omni

Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell defeated Bobby Eaton & Chris Benoit when Scorpio pinned Benoit in 9:20 (***1/4), Sid Vicious pinned Van Hammer in 0:36 (DUD), Dick Murdoch & Don Muraco & Superfly Snuka fought Jim Brunzell & Blackjack Mulligan & Wahoo McDaniel to a no-contest at 9:06 (legends match: no rating), Thunderbolt Patterson & Brad Armstrong (subbing for his father, Bob) defeated Ivan Koloff & Baron Von Raschke when Patterson pinned Von Raschke at 4:40 (legends match: no rating), Ric Flair introduced Paul Roma as the new Fourth Horseman in a "Flair for the Gold" segment, Nick Bockwinkel fought Dory Funk Jr. to a 15 minute draw (legends match: no rating), Rick Rude & Paul Orndorff defeated Kensuke Sasaki & Dustin Rhodes when Rude pinned Sasaki at 9:10 (**), Sting pinned The Prisoner ("Nailz") at 5:17 (1/4*), The Hollywood Blondes (Brian Pillman & Steve Austin, champs) defeated Dos Hombres (Rick Steamboat & Tom Zenk) when Austin pinned Zenk at 15:20 in a cage match to retain the WCW Tag Team Titles, Barry Windham pinned Arn Anderson to retain the NWA World Heavyweight Title at 10:56 (***), and Davey Boy Smith defeated Big Van Vader by DQ to retain the WCW Heavyweight Title at 16:22 (****).

Statistics: Est. buyrate (0.5); live attendance 7,008 (3,722 paid, \$37,000); Torch poll results: 4.9 (avg. score), Vader vs. Smith (best match), Sting vs. Prisoner (worst match).

WWF King of the Ring June 11—Pay-Per-View Dayton, Ohio—Nutter Center

Bret Hart pinned Razor Ramon at 10:24 (***1/2), Mr. Perfect beat Mr. Hughes by DQ at 5:10, Bam Bam Bigelow pinned Jim Duggan at 4:38 (**1/4), Tatanka wrestled Lex Luger to a draw in 15:00 (*), Bret Hart pinned Mr. Perfect at 19:00 to advance to the finals (***1/2), Yokozuna pinned Hulk Hogan at 13:11 to capture the WWF Title (***), Rick & Scott Steiner and The Smoking Gunns defeated Money Inc. and The Head Shrinkers when Bret Gunn pinned Ted DiBiase at 7:04 (**3/4), Shawn Michaels (champ) pinned Crush at 11:12 to retain the WWF Intercontinental Title (**1/2), and Bret Hart pinned Bam Bam Bigelow at 18:04 to win the "King of the Ring" tournament (****).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.1% (\$2.6 million); live attendance 8,000 (7,000 paid, \$78,000); Torch poll results: 7.2 (avg. reader score), Hart vs. Hennig (best match), Bigelow vs. Duggan (worst match).

WCW Clash of the Champions June 16—Live TBS Special Norfolk, Va.—The Scope

Ron Simmons pinned Dick Slater in 3:54 (1/2*), Lord Steven pinned Marcus Bagwell at 6:16 (3/4*), Maxx Payne defeated Johnny B. Badd by forfeit when Badd was too injured to wrestle, Barry Windham pinned Too Cold Scorpio at 12:50 (***1/4), Big Van Vader & Rick Rude & Sid Vicious beat Sting & Dustin Rhodes & British Bulldog when Rude pinned Rhodes at 10:57 (**3/4), and Ric Flair & Arn Anderson defeated The Hollywood Blondes (champs) two falls to none, although the second fall by DQ, so the WCW Tag Team Titles did not change hands (***3/4).

Statistics: TV rating 2.6; Torch poll results: 6.1, Flair & Anderson vs. The Blondes (best match), Simmons vs. Slater (worst match).

WCW Beach Blast July 18—Pay-Per-View

Biloxi, Ms.—Gulf Coast Coliseum

Paul Orndorff (champ) defeated Ron Simmons by DQ at 11:15 to retain the WCW TV Title (*3/4), Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell defeated Tex Slatenger & Shanghai Pierce when Scorpio pinned Slatenger at 12:14 (***1/4), Lord Steven Regal pinned Erik Watts in 7:02 (**), Johnny B. Badd pinned Maxx Payne at 4:47 (1/2*), The Hollywood Blondes (champs) defeated Paul Roma & Arn Anderson when Austin pinned Roma to retain the WCW Tag Team Titles (***1/4), Rick Rude fought Dustin Rhodes to a 30 minute draw so the U.S. Heavyweight Title remained held up (*1/4), Ric Flair pinned Barry Windham (champ) at 11:26 to capture the NWA World Heavyweight Title (***), and Sting & Davey Boy Smith defeated Big Van Vader & Sid Vicious (***1/2).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5; live attendance 8,600 (4,000 paid, \$33,000); Torch poll results: 5.3 (average reader score), Sting & Smith vs. Vader & Vicious (best match), Watts vs. Regal (worst match).

WCW Clash of the Champions August 18—Live TBS Special Daytona Beach, Fla.—Ocean Center

Arn Anderson & Paul Roma defeated Steve Austin & Lord Steven Regal (replacing the injured Brian Pillman) at 9:44 to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles (**3/4), Too Cold Scorpio pinned Bobby Eaton at 5:26 (**1/2), Johnny B. Badd pinned Maxx Payne at 2:36, The Shockmaster debuted on a "Flair for the Gold" segment (where Shockmaster tripped and fell while breaking through a wall), Rick Steamboat pinned Paul Orndorff (champ) at 8:30 to capture the WCW TV Title (***), Sting & Ric Flair defeated Awesome Kong & King Kong when Sting pinned Awesome at 2:14 (1/4*), Dustin Rhodes & Road Warrior Hawk defeated Rick Rude & The Equalizer at 7:41 (*1/4), Big Van Vader (champ) defeated Davey Boy Smith to retain the WCW Heavyweight Title at 11:11.

Statistics: TV rating 3.8; live attendance 8,903 (2,400 paid, \$20,000); Torch poll results: 4.6 (avg. reader score), Vader vs. Bulldog (best match), Badd vs. Payne (worst match).

SMW K-Town Showdown August 20: Annual Major Arena Show Knoxville, Tenn.—Knoxville Coliseum

Bobby Blaze defeated Dirty White Boy by decision (***1/4), Tim Horner beat Chris Candido by DQ in a "losers wears a diaper" match (***1/2), Brian Lee (champ) beat The Mongolian Stomper to retain the SMW Heavyweight Title (***1/2), Big Bossman pinned Kevin Sullivan in a "Singapore spike" match (***), The Bruise Brothers won a four-team elimination match that also included The Rock & Roll Express, The Heavenly Bodies, and Steve & Scott Armstrong (****), and Bob Armstrong pinned Jim Cornette in a lumberjack match (****).

Statistics: Live attendance 2,800 (\$18,000); match ratings by Tim Whitehead.

USWA Arena Event

August 23: High-attendance mark for '93

Memphis, Tenn.—Mid-South Coliseum

American Eagle #1 & Billy McGullig beat Hawk & Leon Downs (DUD), Miss Texas pinned Luna Vachon (**1/2), Collin Scotts pinned Tony Falk (*), The Dog Catchers defeated The Moondogs (**), Brian Christopher pinned Chris Adams (***1/2), PG13 defeated Mario & Jimmy Valiant (neg. **), Jeff Jarrett pinned Vampire Warrior (champ) to capture the USWA Heavyweight Title, Jerry Lawler pinned Paul Neighbors (w/Vince McMahon in his corner) during which Vince McMahon playing the heel role got into an altercation with Lawler, and Lex Luger pinned Yokozuna in a non-title match (**).

Statistics: Live attendance 3,600 (\$20,000).

WWF SummerSlam

August 30—Pay-Per-View

Auburn Hills, Mich.—The Palace

Owen Hart pinned Barry Horowitz at 13:19 (**), Razor Ramon pinned Ted DiBiase at 7:28 (**), Rick & Scott Steiner (champs) defeated The Heavenly Bodies at 9:50 to retain the WWF Tag Team Titles (***1/2), Shawn Michaels defeated Mr. Perfect at 11:20 to retain the WWF Intercontinental Title (***), I.R.S. pinned 1-2-3 Kid at 6:12 (*3/4), Bret Hart defeated Doink by DQ (**), Jerry Lawler defeated Bret Hart on a reversed decision at 6:46 (***), Ludvig Borga defeated Marty Jannetty by submission at 7:00 (*1/4), Undertaker defeated Giant Gonzales (DUD).

The Smoking Gunns & Tatanka defeated The Head Shrinkers & Bam Bam Bigelow when Tatanka pinned Samu (**), and Lex Luger defeated Yokozuna (champ) by countout in a WWF Title match (**1/4).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.3% (\$3.1 million); live attendance 20,000 (\$215,000); Torch poll results: 7.1 (avg. reader score), Hart vs. Lawler and Doink (best match(es)), Undertaker vs. Gonzales (worst match).

WCW Fall Brawl September 19—Pay-Per-View Houston, Tex.—Astro Arena

Lord Steven Regal defeated Ricky Steamboat (champ) to capture the WCW TV Title at 17:14 (*1/2), Charlie Norris pinned Big Sky at 5:09 (DUD), Marcus Bagwell & Too Cold Scorpio defeated Paul Orndorff & The Equalizer at 10:40 (3/4*), Ice Train pinned Shanghai Pierce at 3:24 (1/2*), The Nasty Boys defeated Arn Anderson & Paul Roma (champs) to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles at 23:41 (*1/4), Cactus Jack defeated Yoshi Kwan at 3:47 (*3/4), Rick Rude pinned Ric Flair (champ) to capture the NWA World Heavyweight Title at 30:43 (**1/2), and Sting & Davey Boy Smith & The Shockmaster & Dustin Rhodes defeated Vader & Sid Vicious & Harlem Heat in WarGames at 16:39 when Cole submitted to Shockmaster (*).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.46 (\$1.07 million); live attendance 6,000 (3,500 paid, \$35,000); Torch poll results: 3.4, Flair vs. Rude (best match), Norris vs. Sky (worst match).

WCW Halloween Havoc October 24—Pay-Per-View New Orleans, La.—Lakefront Arena

Shockmaster & Charlie Norris & Ice Train beat Harlem Heat & The Equalizer when Shockmaster pinned Cole at 8:56 (*), Paul Orndorff defeated Ricky Steamboat by countout at 18:36 (**1/2), Lord Steven Regal fought Davey Boy Smith to a 15 minute draw (**), Dustin Rhodes (champ) pinned Steve Austin at 14:24 to retain the U.S. Heavyweight Title, The Nasty Boys defeated Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell (champs) when Sags pinned Scorpio at 14:27 to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles, Sting defeated Sid Vicious at 10:39 (*1/2), Rick Rude defeated Ric Flair by DQ at 19:15 to retain the NWA Heavyweight Title (***), and Vader defeated Cactus Jack at 16:06 of a Texas death match (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5 (\$1.17 million); live attendance 6,000 (3,000 paid, \$30,000); Torch poll results: 5.8 (avg. reader score), Vader vs. Jack (best match), Shockmaster & Norris & Train vs. Heat & Equalizer (worst match).

IWC/AAA La Lucha Del Honor November 12—Live Arena Event Los Angeles, Calif.—L.A. Sports Arena

Psicopata & Crazy Boy defeated Piloto Suicida & Mercurio at 8:22, Louie Spicolli & Vandal Drummond (beat Super Boy & Captain Oro at 9:33, El Mexicano & Terrero & Winners beat Baby Sharon & May Flowers & Rudy Reyna at 24:48; Misterioso & Volador & Rey Misterio Jr. beat La Parka & Espectro Jr. & La Momia at 26:30, El Hijo del Santo & Octagon & Mascara Sagrada beat Heavy Metal & Jerry Estrada & Fuerza Guerrera, and Jake Roberts & Love Machine & Eddy Guerrero beat Konnan El Barbaro & Perro Aguayo & Blue Panther at 24:40.

Statistics: Live attendance 12,500 (11,600 paid, \$195,000).

ECW November to Remember November 13—Arena Event Philadelphia, Pa.—ECW Arena

Sal Bellomo beat Rockin' Rebel, Sandman pinned Jim Neidhart, Public Enemy beat Badd Company, Kevin Sullivan defeated Tommy Cairo in a shoot-fight match, Johnny Hotbody & Tony Stetson (champs) pinned Ian & Axl Rotten to retain the ECW Tag Team Titles, Mr. Hughes beat Johnny Gunn, Sensational Sherri beat Madusa by forfeit, and Sabu & Hawk defeated Terry Funk & King Kong Bundy when Sabu pinned Funk.

Statistics: 1,400 (1,050 paid, \$15,000), largest ECW crowd of the year.

WCW BattleBowl November 20—Pay-Per-View Pensacola, Fla.—Civic Center

Vader & Cactus Jack beat Charlie Norris & Harlem Heat Cain when Vader pinned Norris at 7:35 (*), Johnny B. Badd & Brian Nobbs defeated Paul Roma & Erik Watts when Nobbs pinned Watts at 12:55 (1/2*),

Shockmaster & Paul Orndorff beat Rick Steamboat & Lord Steven Regal when Shockmaster pinned Regal at 11:25 (*1/4), King Kong & Dustin Rhodes defeated Awesome Kong & The Equalizer when Rhodes pinned Kong at 5:54 (1/4*), Sting & Jerry Sags defeated Ron Simmons & Keith Cole when Sags pinned Cole at 12:45 (*1/2), Ric Flair & Steve Austin defeated Too Cold Scorpio & Maxx Payne when Payne submitted to Flair at 14:19, Rick Rude & Shanghai Pierce defeated Marcus Bagwell & Tex Slatzenger when Rude pinned Slatzenger at 14:38, and Vader eliminated Sting to win the BattleBowl battle royal at 25:34 (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.27 (\$647,000); live attendance 7,000 (3,000 paid, \$30,000); Torch poll results: 3.2 (avg. reader score), BattleBowl battle royal (best match), King & Rhodes vs. Awesome & Equalizer (worst match)

WWF Survivor Series November 24—Pay-Per-View Boston, Mass.—Boston Garden

Razor Ramon & Randy Savage & 1-2-3 Kid & Marty Jannetty defeated I.R.S. & Adam Bomb & Rick Martel & Diesel when Kid and Jannetty were the final two survivors at 26:08 (***1/4), Bret & Owen & Bruce & Keith Hart defeated Shawn Michaels & Red Knight & Blue Knight & Black Knight when Bret & Bruce & Keith Hart were the survivors at 23:44 (*3/4), The Heavenly Bodies defeated The Rock & Roll Express when Tom Prichard pinned Robert Gibson to capture the SMW Tag Team Titles at 13:41 (***), The Four Doinks (Bushwackers & M.O.M.) defeated Bastion Booger & Bam Bam Bigelow & The Head Shrinkers when the Four Doinks survived at 9:56 (DUD), and Lex Luger & The Undertaker & Scott & Rick Steiner defeated Yokozuna & Ludvig Borga & Crush & Jacques Rougeau when Luger survived at 26:20 (**3/4).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.82 (\$2.08 million); live attendance 15,509 (sellout, \$180,000); Torch poll results: 4.1 (avg. reader score), Bodies vs. Express (best match), Doinks vs. Bigelow & Booger & Shrinkers (worst match).

SMW Christmas Chaos December 26—Annual Arena Event Johnson City, Tenn.—Freedom Hall

Chris Candido defeated Brian Armstrong (**1/4), Prince Kharis defeated Bobby Blaze (3/4*), The Moondogs defeated The Bruise Brothers (**), The Bullet defeated Dick Murdoch (*1/2), The Heavenly Bodies defeated Doug & Mike Furnas (***1/2), and Brian Lee (champ) beat Tracy Smothers and Dirty White Boy in the "Triple Threat" match to retain the SMW Title.

Statistics: Live attendance 1,700 (\$8,500); match ratings by Tim Whitehead.

ECW Holiday Hell December 26—Arena Event Philadelphia, Pa.—ECW Arena

Awsome Mike defeated Hollywood D (*1/2), Mr. Hughes (mgd. by Jason) defeated Sandman (w/Peaches) (*), Kevin Sullivan & The Tazmaniac (champs) defeated J.T. Smith & Tommy Cairo to retain the ECW Tag Team Titles (***), Rockin' Rebel defeated Don E. Allen (DUD), Terry Funk defeated Sabu (mgd. by Paul E. Dangerously), Pat Tanaka pinned "Flyboy" Rocco Rock (*), Shane Douglas defeated Tommy Dreamer (*), and Shane Douglas won a lights-out battle royal. Statistics: Live attendance 1,040 (\$15,000); match ratings by Chris Forbes.

WCW Starrcade '93 December 27—Pay-Per-View Charlotte, N.C.—Independent Arena

Paul Orndorff & Paul Roma defeated Marcus Bagwell & Too Cold Scorpio in 11:15 (*3/4), Shockmaster & Awesome Kong at 1:30 (1/4*), Lord Steven Regal fought Rick Steamboat to a TLDW at 13:00 (**), Cactus Jack & Maxx Payne defeated Shanghai Pierce & Tex Slatzenger at 7:36 (*3/4), Steve Austin defeated Dustin Rhodes (champ) two falls to one to capture the U.S. Heavyweight Title at 16:15 (**1/4), Rick Rude (champ) pinned The Boss at 9:05 to retain the WCW International Heavyweight Title (*1/2), The Nasty Boys defeated Hawk & Sting by DQ to retain the WCW Tag Team Titles at 27:39 (*), and Ric Flair pinned Vader (champ) to capture the WCW World Heavyweight Title at 20:24 (***1/4).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.55 (\$1.35 million); live attendance 8,000 (7,000 paid, \$62,000); Torch poll results: 7.4 (avg. reader score), Flair vs. Vader (best match), Shockmaster vs. Kong (worst match).

Title Changes

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION WWF Champion

Yokozuna defeated Bret Hart (Apr. 4, Las Vegas, Nev.)
Hulk Hogan defeated Yokozuna (Apr. 4, Las Vegas, NV)
Yokozuna defeated Hulk Hogan (June 13, Dayton, Ohio).

WWF Intercontinental

Marty Jannetty defeated Shawn Michaels (May 17, New York, N.Y.)
Shawn Michaels defeated Marty Jannetty (June 6, Albany, N.Y.)
Shawn Michaels stripped of title after leaving the WWF (Sept. 27)
Razor Ramon defeated Rick Martel (Sept. 27, New Haven, Conn.; Ramon and Michaels were the last two remaining in a battle royal to decide who would fight for the title)

WWF Tag Team

Rick & Scott Steiner defeated Money Inc. (June 14, Columbus, Ohio)
Money Inc. beat Rick & Scott Steiner (June 16, Rockford, Ill.)
Rick & Scott Steiner defeated Money Inc. (June 19, St. Louis, Mo.)
The Quebecers defeated Rick & Scott Steiner (Sept. 13, New York, N.Y.)

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

WCW World Heavyweight

Sting defeated Big Van Vader (Mar. 11, London, England)
Big Van Vader defeated Sting (Mar. 17, Dublin, Ireland)
Ric Flair defeated Big Van Vader (Dec. 27, Charlotte, N.C.)

WCW U.S. Heavyweight Title

Dustin Rhodes defeated Rick Steamboat (Jan. 11, Atlanta, Ga., tournament final)
Dustin Rhodes defeated Rick Rude (Aug. 31, Atlanta, Ga., title had been held up)

WCW World Television Title

Rick Steamboat defeated Paul Orndorff (Aug. 18, Daytona Beach, Fla.)

WCW World Tag Team Titles

Steve Austin & Brian Pillman defeated Rick Steamboat & Shane Douglas (Mar. 2, Atlanta, Ga.)
Arn Anderson & Paul Roma defeated Steve Austin & Lord Steven Regal (Aug. 18, Daytona Beach, Fla.)
The Nasty Boys defeated Arn Anderson & Paul Roma (Sept. 19, Houston, Tex.)
Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell defeated The Nasty Boys (Oct. 4, Columbus, Ga.)
The Nasty Boys defeated Scorpio & Bagwell (Oct. 24, New Orleans, La.)

SMOKY MOUNTAIN WRESTLING

SMW Heavyweight Title

Tracy Smothers defeated Dirty White Boy (Apr. 12, Pikeville, Ky.)
Tracy Smothers defeated Tony Anthony (June 11, Knoxville, Tenn.; title had been held up)
Brian Lee defeated Tracy Smothers (July 17, Knoxville, Tenn.)

SMW Tag Team Titles

The Heavenly Bodies defeated The Rock & Roll Express (Jan. 18, Newton, N.C.)
The Rock & Roll Express defeated The Heavenly Bodies (May 15, Johnson City, Tenn.)
The Bruise Brothers defeated The Rock & Roll Express (June 28, Council, Va.)
The Rock & Roll Express defeated The Bruise Brothers (Sept. 11, Morristown, Tenn.)
The Heavenly Bodies defeated The Rock & Roll Express (Nov. 24, Boston Mass.)

SMW U.S. Junior Heavyweight Title

Chris Candido defeated Bobby Blaze (Oct. 4, Jellico, Tenn., Blaze was the first champion)
Bobby Blaze defeated Candido (Oct. 8, Knoxville, Tenn.)
Chris Candido beat Blaze (Oct. 9, Barbourville, Ky.)
Bobby Blaze beat Chris Candido (Oct. 10, Johnson City, Tenn.)

SMW Television Title

Night Stalker beat Tracy Smothers (Feb. 8, Jellico, Tenn.)

Tim Horner beat Night Stalker (Feb. 8, Jellico, Tenn.)

Bobby Eaton beat Tim Horner (Mar. 1, Sevierville, Tenn.)

Brian Lee beat Bobby Eaton (Apr. 19, Barbourville, Ky.)

Bobby Blaze beat Dirty White Boy (June 7, Cumberland, Ky.; Lee vacated after fulfilling his gauntlet of defenses)

Dirty White Boy beat Blaze (June 28, Council, Va.)

Jimmy Del Rey beat Ricky Morton (Aug. 16, Clintonwood, Va.; DWB vacated after fulfilling his gauntlet of defenses)

Robert Gibson defeated Jimmy Del Rey (Aug. 13, Oakwood, Va.)

Dirty White Boy beat Robert Gibson (Aug. 13, Oakwood, Va.)

Tim Horner beat Juicy Johnny (Oct. 25, Haysi, Va.)

Tracy Smothers defeated Jimmy Del Rey (Dec. 6, Jefferson N.C.)

Chris Candido beat Tracy Smothers (Dec. 6, Jefferson N.C.)

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

USWA Unified Heavyweight Title

Papa Shango defeated Jerry Lawler (May 3, Memphis, Tenn.)

Owen Hart defeated Shango (June 21, Memphis, Tenn.)

Jerry Lawler defeated Hart (July 5, Memphis, Tenn.)

Tatanka defeated Lawler (Sept. 13, Memphis, Tenn.)

Jerry Lawler defeated Tatanka (Sept. 20, Memphis, Tenn.; Lawler pinned Tatanka in a special stipulations tag team match)

Randy Savage defeated Lawler (Oct. 11, Memphis, Tenn.)

Jeff Jarrett won a battle royal (Nov. 22, Memphis, Tenn.; Savage stripped of WWF Title as a result of suspension of USWA-WWF relationship stemming from indictment of Jerry Lawler on charges of statutory rape)

Jerry Lawler defeated Jarrett (Dec. 20, Memphis, Tenn.)

USWA Tag Team Titles

The Moondogs defeated Ron & Don Harris (Jan. 11, Memphis, Tenn.)

Ron & Don Harris defeated Jerry Lawler & Jeff Jarrett (Jan. 25, Memphis, Tenn.; tournament final, Moondogs had been stripped of titles)

The Moondogs defeated Ron & Don Harris (Feb. 1, Memphis, Tenn.)

Ron & Don Harris defeated The Moondogs (Feb. 15, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Moondogs defeated Ron & Don Harris (Feb. 22, Memphis, Tenn.)

Brian Christopher & Big Black Dog defeated The Moondogs (Mar. 8, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Moondogs defeated Christopher & Black Dog (Mar. 15, Memphis, Tenn.)

Brian Christopher & Scott Flamingo defeated The Moondogs (Mar. 22, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Moondogs defeated Christopher & Flamingo (Mar. 29, Memphis, Tenn.)

Steve Doll & Rex King defeated The Moondogs (Apr. 12, Memphis, Tenn.)

New Jack & Homeboy defeated Steve Doll & Rex King (June 21, Memphis, Tenn.)

C.W. Bergstrom & Melvin Penrod Jr. defeated New Jack & Homeboy (July 5, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Dog Catchers beat The Moondogs (Aug. 16, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Moondogs defeated The Dog Catchers (Sept. 6, Memphis, Tenn.)

The Dog Catchers defeated The Moondogs (Sept. 13, Memphis, Tenn.)

Moondog Spike & Mike Anthony defeated The Dog Catchers (Oct. 4, Memphis, Tenn.)

Brian Christopher & Jeff Jarrett beat Jerry Lawler & Red Knight (Oct. 25, Memphis, Tenn.; Dog Catchers had vacated the titles)

Rex Hargrove & Koko B. Ware defeated Christopher & Jarrett (Nov. 1, Memphis, Tenn.)

Brian Christopher & Jeff Jarrett defeated Rex Hargrove & Koko B. Ware (Nov. 8, Memphis, Tenn.)

PG13 defeated Jeff Gaylord & Mike Anthony (Nov. 22, Memphis, Tenn.; tournament final to fill vacated titles)

The War Machines defeated Mike Anthony & Jeff Gaylord (Dec. 6, Memphis, Tenn.)

Far Too Wild defeated Machines (Dec. 15, Evansville, Ind.)

Magnificent Muraco defeated Sandman (Apr. 1, Radnor, Pa.)

Tito Santana defeated Muraco (Aug. 8, Philadelphia, Pa.)

Shane Douglas awarded title (Aug. 19, Santana left ECW)

Sabu defeated Douglas (Oct. 2, Philadelphia, Pa.)

Terry Funk defeated Sabu (Dec. 26, Philadelphia, Pa.)

ECW Television Title

Jimmy Snuka defeated Glen Osborne (Mar. 12, Radnor, Pa. in tournament final)

Terry Funk beat Snuka (Oct. 1, Philadelphia, Pa.)

Sabu beat Terry Funk (Nov. 13, Philadelphia, Pa.; won in special stipulation tag team match)

ECW Tag Team Titles

Tony Stetson & Larry Winters defeated Super Destroyers (Apr. 4, Radnor, Pa.)

Super Destroyers beat Johnny Hotbody & Chris Michaels (May 15, Philadelphia, Pa.)

Eddie Gilbert & Dark Patriot beat Super Destroyers (Aug. 7, Philadelphia)

Johnny Hotbody & Tony Stetson were awarded titles when The Gilberts left ECW (Oct. 1)

Johnny Gunn & Tommy Dreamer defeated Johnny hotbody & Tony Stetson (Nov. 13, Philadelphia)

Kevin Sullivan & Tazmaniac beat Tommy Dreamer & Shane Douglas (Dec. 4, Philadelphia, Pa.)

Randy Savage
Irwin R. Schyster
Rick Steiner
Scott Steiner

Tatanka

Undertaker

Luna Vachon
Greg Valentine
Virgil

Harvey Whippleman

Yokozuna

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

Arn Anderson
Steve Austin
Brad Armstrong

Johnny B. Badd
Marcus Bagwell
The Boss

Bobby Eaton
The Equalizer

Ric Flair

Harlem Heat Cane
Harlem Heat Cole
Hawk
Bobby Heenan
Missy Hyatt

Cactus Jack

Awesome Kong
King Kong

Lightning
Teddy Long

Mongolian Mauler
Great Muta

Nasty Boy Nobbs
Nasty Boy Saggs

Paul Orndorff

Col. Robert Parker
The Patriot
Maxx Payne
Shanghai Pierce
Brian Pillman

Harley Race
Lord Steven Regal
Dustin Rhodes
Terror Rising
Paul Roma
Rick Rude

Too Cold Scorpio
Shockmaster
Ron Simmons
Tex Slazenger
Kevin Sullivan
Mark Starr
Rick Steamboat
Jungle Jim Steele
Sting

Terry Taylor
Thunder
Ice Train

Vader
Van Hammer
Jesse Ventura

Erik Watts

Larry Zbyszko
Tom Zenk

Randy Poffo
Lawrence Rotunda
Robert Rechsteiner
Scott Rechsteiner

Chris Chavis

Mark Callaway

Angel Vachon
John Wisniski Jr.
Mike Jones

David Lauer

Rodney Anoia

Marty Lunde
Steve Williams
Robert James Jr.

Mark Mero
Marcus Bagwell
Ray Traylor

Bobby Eaton
Bill Dannenhauser

Richard Fliehr

(a/k/a Stevie Ray)
(a/k/a Booker Ray)
Michael Hegstrand
Raymond Heenan
Missy Hiatt

Michael Foley

Dwayne McCullough
Scott Thompson

Jeff Farmer
Theodore Long

Pete Miller
Kelji Muto

Brian Yandrisovitz
Jerry Saganowich

Paul Orndorff

Robert Welch
Del Wilkes
Darryl Peterson
Mark Centerberry
Brian Pillman

Harley Race
Steve Regal
Dustin Runnels
Paul Leveque
Paul Centopani
Richard Rood

Charlie Skaggs
Fred Ottman
Ron Simmons
Dennis Knight
Kevin Sullivan
Mark Ashford-Smith
Richard Blood
Jim Steele
Steve Borden

Paul Taylor
Clark Haines
Harold Raines

Leon White
Mark Hildreth
Jim Janos

Eric Watts

Larry Whistler
Tom Zenk

Roster and Real Names

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

Bob Backlund
Paul Bearer
Adam Bomb
Bastion Booger
Ludvig Borga
Bam Bam Bigelow
Alundra Blaze
Brooklyn Brawler
Bushwacker Butch
Bushwacker Luke

Crush

Jimmy Del Rey
Diesel
Dink
Doink

Earthquake

Mr. Fuji

Bart Gunn
Billy Gunn

Bret Hart
Owen Hart
Head Shrinker Fatu
Head Shrinker Samu

Marty Jannetty
Jeff Jarrett
1-2-3 Kid

Kwang

Lex Luger

Mabel
Rick Martel
Shawn Michaels
Mo

Mr. Perfect
Sparky Plugg
Johnny Polo
Jim Powers
Tom Prichard

Quebecer Jacques
Quebecer Pierre

Razor Ramon

Robert Backlund
William Moody
Brian Clark
Mike Shaw
Tony Halme
Scott Bigelow
Debra Miceli
Steve Lombardi
Robert Miller
Brian Wickens

Bryan Adams

Jimmy Richland
Kevin Nash
(a/k/a Tiger Jackson)
Ray Apollo

John Tenta

Harry Fujiwara

Mike Plocheck (sp?)
Monty Sopt

Bret Hart
Owen Hart
Salofa Fatu
Samula Anoia

Marty Jannetty
Jeff Jarrett
Sean Waltman

Juan Rivera

Larry Pfohl

Bobby Horne
Richard Vigneault
Michael Hickenbottom
Nelson Frasier

Curt Hennig
Robert Holly
Scott Levy
James Manley
Tom Prichard

Jacques Rougeau
Pierre Oulette

Scott Hall

SMOKY MOUNTAIN WRESTLING

Bob Armstrong

Robert James Sr.

EASTERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

ECW Heavyweight Title

Brian Armstrong Scott Armstrong Steve Armstrong	Brian James Scott James Steve James
Bobby Blaze	Robert Schmedley
Chris Candido Jim Cornette	Chris Candido James Cornette
Jimmy Del Rey Dirty White Boy Dirty White Girl Steven Dunn	Jim Richland Tony Anthony Kim Wolser Steve Doll
Robbie Eagle	Rob Kellum
Doug Furnas Mike Furnas Tammy Fytch	Doug Furnas Mike Furnas Tammy Sytch
Robert Gibson	Ruben Kane
Don Harris Rob Harris Tim Horner The Horner	Don Harris Ron Harris Tim Horner Brian Kees
Prince Kharis Killer Kyle	Rob Mayze Mark Kyle
Brian Lee	Brian Harris
Dutch Mantell Anthony Michaels Ricky Morton Dick Murdoch	Wayne Cowan Anthony Michaels Rick Morton Dick Murdoch
Tom Prichard	Tom Prichard
Tracy Smothers Daryl Van Horne Timothy Well Ron Wright	Tracy Smothers Jimmy Mitchell Rex King Ron Wright

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION
(Roster fluctuates week-to-week more so than other promotions. This is partial list of late-1993 regulars.)

Mike Anthony Big Business Brown	Mike Lozanski Chris Brown
Brian Christopher Skull Von Crush	Brian Lawler Vito Lograsso
Wolfie D Danny Davis Lauren Davenport	David Wolfe Dan Burielle Beverly Hampton
Jeff Gaylord Doug Gilbert Eddie Gilbert J.C. Ice	Jeff Gaylord Doug Gilbert Eddie Gilbert Jamie Crookshanks
Jerry Lawler Ronnie Lotz	Jerry Lawler Ronnie Lotz
Moondog Cujo Moondog Spike Moondog Spike Moondog Spot Moondog Rex Todd Morton	Lanny Kean Bill Smithson Bubba White Larry Latham Nathan ??? Todd Stratten
Bert Prentise Del Rios	Bert Prentise Del Rios
Koko B. Ware Vampire Warrior Tony Williams	James Ware Dave Heath Tony Williams

EASTERN CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING
Chad Austin
Mike Awesome

Sal Bellomo Tommy Cairo	Salvatore Bellomo Tommy Cairo
Paul E. Dangerously Paul Diamond Shane Douglas Tommy Dreamer	Paul Heyman Tom Boric Troy Martin Tom Laughlin

Terry Funk	Terry Funk
Johnny Grunge	Mike Durham
Mr. Hughes	Curtis Hughes
Jason	Jason Knight
911	(a/k/a "Big Al")
Rockin' Rebel Hunter Q. Robbins Flyboy Rocco Rock Axl Rotten Ian Rotten	Chuck Williams Robbin Hunt Ted Petty Brian Knighton John Williams
Sabu Sandman J.T. Smith Jimmy Snuka Pitbull Spike Joey Styles Kevin Sullivan	Terry Brunk Jim Fullington John T. Smith James Reiher Gary Smith Joe Bonsignore Kevin Francis Sullivan
Pat Tanaka Tazmaniac	Patrick Tanaka Pete Senerca

Past Secondary Award Winners

13. Best Workate ("Outstanding Wrestler" pre-1992)

1992: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels
1991: Ric Flair, Cactus Jack, Arn Anderson
1990: Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, Bobby Eaton
1989: Ric Flair, Terry Funk, Rick Steamboat

14. Independent MVP

1992: Lightning Kid, Eddie Gilbert, Terry Funk
1991: Lightning Kid, Cactus Jack, Eddie Gilbert
1990: Ricky Rice, Terry Funk, Cactus Jack
1989: Ricky Rice, Jerry Lawler, Scotty the Body (Levy)

15. Promotion of the Year

1992: SMW, WWF, USWA
1991: WCW, WWF, TWA (Philadelphia)
1990: WCW, USWA, WWF
1989: NWA, WWF, Portland
1988: WWF, NWA, CWA (now USWA)

16. Non-TV Promotion of the Year

1992: WWA (NJ), ECW (Phila.), PWA (Minn.)

17. Suit of the Year

1992: Jim Cornette, Vince McMahon, Kip Frey

18. Angle of the Year

1992: Hennig's Prime Time turn; Savage-Flair-Elizabeth; Michaels-Janetty break-up
1991: Undertaker locks Ultimate Warrior in a casket; Flair's entrance into WWF; Savage bitten by Roberts's cobra
1990: Gilbert hits Lawler with speeding car; Windham doubles as Sting and gets pinned; Sting thrown out as member of Four Horsemen

19. Rising Star ("Most Improved" pre-1992)

1992: Shawn Michaels, Brian Christopher, Too Cold Scorpio
1991: Dustin Rhodes, Steve Austin, Cactus Jack
1990: Ron Simmons, Scott Steiner, Butch Reed
1989: Lex Luger, Scott Steiner, Rick Rude
1988: Sting, Rick Steiner, Lex Luger

20. Tailspin of the Year ("Most Deproved" pre-1992)

1992: Owen Hart, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan
1991: Hulk Hogan, Lex Luger, Roddy Piper
1990: Sting, Dusty Rhodes, Kerry Von Erich
1989: Terry Taylor, Dino Bravo, Hackshaw Duggan
1988: Dusty Rhodes, Greg Valentine, Ken Patera

21. Best Weekly TV Show

1992: SMW, WWF Superstars, WWF Prime Time
1991: WCW Sat. Nite, WWF Superstars, WWF Prime
1990: WCW Sat., WWF Superstars, USWA Challenge (Dallas)
1989: NWA World Championship (Sat.), NWA Power

Hour, WWF Superstars
1988: WWF Superstars, NWA World Championship (Sat.), WWF Saturday Night's Main Event (not weekly).

22. Most Embarrassing Wrestler

1992: Papa Shango, Erik Watts, Van Hammer
1991: Van Hammer, P.N. News, Oz (Kevin Nash)

23. Worst Wrestler (with a semblance of a push)

1992: Erik Watts, Nailz, Van Hammer
1991: Van Hammer, Bill Kazmaier, Oz
1990: Junkyard Dog, Ultimate Warrior, Night Stalker (a/k/a Adam Bomb)
1989: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Zeus
1988: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Junkyard Dog

24. Best Announcing Team

1992: Bobby Heenan & Gorilla Monsoon, Bob Caudle & Dutch Mantell, Vince McMahon & Mr. Perfect
1991: Jim Ross & Paul E. Dangerously, Monsoon & Heenan, McMahon & Roddy Piper & Randy Savage
1990: Ross & Dangerously, McMahon & Jesse Ventura, Monsoon & Heenan
1989: McMahon & Ventura, Ross & Jim Cornette, Ross & Caudle.

25. Best on Interviews

1992: Ric Flair, Jim Cornette, Cactus Jack

26. Most Underutilized

1992: Terry Taylor, Arn Anderson, Scotty Flamingo (Levy)

27. Most Overpushed

1992: Erik Watts, Van Hammer, Tatanka

28. Most Insulting Stereotype

1992: Razor Ramon, Missy Hyatt, Papa Shango

29. Best Wrestling Maneuver

1992: Scorpio's 450 degree splash, Frankensteiner, Liger Shooting Star Press

30. Worst Wrestling Maneuver

1992: Erik Watts STF, Crush's head vice, Shango's voodoo

31. Most Charismatic

1993: Sting, Ric Flair, Rick Rude

32. Worst Angle

1992: Shango-Ultimate Warrior voodoo, Dangerously fires Madusa, Rick Martel steals Tatanka's feathers

33. Worst Match

1992: Rick Rude vs. Masa Chono (Oct. 25), Hogan vs. Sid Justice (Apr. 5), Todd Champion vs. Super Invader (May 17)

34. Worst Personality

1992: Erik Watts, Van Hammer, Papa Shango

35. Worst Interviews

1992: Erik Watts, Tony Atlas, Van Hammer

36. Readers' Personal Favorite Wrestler

1992: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Ron Simmons

37. Readers' Least Favorite Wrestler

1992: Erik Watts, Ultimate Warrior, Nailz

38. Japan Wrestler of the Year

1992: Jushin Liger, Kenta Kobashi, Minami Toyota
1991: Liger, Jumbo Tsuruta, Kobashi
1990: Liger, Keiji Muto (Great Muta), Tsuruta
1989: Akira Maeda, Genichiro Tennyu, Liger

39. Japan Tag Team of the Year

1992: Manami Toyota & Toshiyo Yamada, Mitsuahara Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada, Terry Gordy & Steve Williams
1991: Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki, Misawa & Kawada, Gordy & Williams.
1990: Williams & Gordy, Chono & Muto, Misawa & Kawada

40. Japan Feud of the Year

1992: Liger vs. Samurai, Misawa & Co. vs. Tsuruta & Co., Chono vs. Muto
1991: Misawa vs. Tsuruta, Gordy & Williams vs. Misawa & Kawada, Vader vs. Tatsumi Fujinami

1990: Misawa vs. Tsuruta, Liger vs. Naoki Sano, Luger vs. Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit)

41: Japan Match of the Year

1992: Toyota vs. Yamada (8/15), Chono vs. Muta (NWA tour.), Toyota vs. Inoue (5/92)

1991: Hase & Sasaki vs. Steiners (3/9), Misawa & Kawada & Kobashi vs. Tsuruta & Akira Taue & Masa Fuchi (4/20), Liger vs. Owen Hart (4/28)

42: Japan Promotion of the Year

1992: New Japan, All Japan, All Japan Women

1991: All Japan, New Japan, AJW

1990: All Japan, New Japan, UWF (now defunct)

43: Mexico Wrestler of the Year

1992: Blue Panther, Konnan El Barbaro, El Canadian Vampire

Glossary of Insider Wrestling Terms

The following is a list of 116 wrestling terms, many of which are insider terms (i.e. "jargon") or are mainstream terms with their insider definition, which generally have been exclusive to the behind-the-scenes aspects of the wrestling business for most of this century, although in recent years as the inner-workings of the wrestling industry have become more open, many terms have been adopted by staunch fans and journalists who cover professional wrestling. Many of the terms date back to pro wrestling's carnival days in the early-1900s. Basic wrestling terms such as bodyslam and turnbuckle are not defined. A term which is defined elsewhere, but used within a definition is denoted with "[dfn]" in case cross-reference is desired.

Abortion (n) A failed angle [dfn], match, or feud [dfn]; a flop. (Term being phased out in some circles due to emotions associated with that word; considered in some circles a tasteless term.)

Angle (n) An event or series of events, usually a confrontation of some kind among wrestlers and managers, that begins or intensifies a feud.

Around the Horn (n) The road trip to each town or a series of towns in which a promotion runs events.

Babyface (n) The "good guy" or "hero." The performer whom the promoter books [dfn] in the position of being cheered.

Blade (v) To cut one's self, usually with a small portion of a razor blade with tape wrapped around all but a fraction of a millimeter of the cutting edge. The exposed portion is then run across the skin to cause a clean, shallow slice in the skin which bleeds.

Blow Up (v) To become cardiovascularly exhausted during a match.

Book 1. (v) To schedule a wrestler for a card. 2. (n) Slang for booking position.

Booked (n) Past tense of book [dfn], to be scheduled for a card.

Booker (n) One who books [dfn] and hires wrestlers, decides who wins and loses matches and in what manner those finishes occur, plans the long-term direction of the company, and organizes and plots television programs.

Bootleg (adj.) Describing an item that is illegally duplicated and sold or traded, usually copyrighted tapes, either wrestling broadcasts or commercial tapes, among wrestling fans around the country. Also describes someone who deals in bootlegged material. (There is also public domain selling and trading that takes place which is legal and not considered "bootleg" dealing.)

Bounce (n) Old, rarely used term for the move that leads to the pinfall.

Boys (n) Wrestlers.

Bozark (n) A female wrestler; a rarely used old carney [dfn.] term.

Brass (n) Management.

Bull (n) Old, rarely used term for the promoter.

Bump (n, v) To fall to the mat after being on the receiving end of a wrestling maneuver or blow to the body.

Bury (v) 1. To criticize or attempt to defame someone. 2. To lower someone in the eyes of the fans or their peers.

Broadway (n) A draw, called that because years ago it was considered a positive by both wrestlers.

Business, The (n) The wrestling industry.

Call a Match (v) Inform opponent throughout match of upcoming moves or spots [dfn]; i.e. to "lead the dance."

Card. (n) A line-up of matches.

Carney (n.) Short for "carnival terminology," the root of many insider wrestlers terms where professional wrestling has roots in the early-1900s.

Carry (v) 1. To "call a match" [dfn]. 2. To make a lesser opponent look skillful in the eyes of the fans.

Cheap Heat (n) Usually referring to heel [dfn] fan heat [dfn], although can refer to any form of fan heat, which is achieved through means that do not take polished and respected skill, such as swearing at fans, using racial epithets, making lewd hand gestures, or exploiting a recent or ongoing political situation (i.e. a hostage crisis, war, or natural disaster).

Color (n) Blood.

Cut a Promo (v) 1. To be interviewed or give promotional speech on upcoming match in order to arouse fan interest in match. 2. (slang) To brow-beat or demean someone skillfully.

Dagger (n) A prepared razor blade with more of the blade exposed than necessary.

Dark Match (n) A match that is not taped for television at a television taping or live broadcast.

Draw (n) 1. A time-limit match with no winner. 2. Insider term for cash payment night of show as an advance on the earned paycheck to be issued later; a per diem.

Dusty finish (n) To have an apparent pinfall in a match, usually counted by a second referee, only to have it overruled by the original referee, who usually was temporarily knocked out while the second referee counted a pinfall. (Although not a finish invented by Dusty Rhodes, it was used so often by Rhodes during his booking reigns that the finish [dfn] has taken on his name.)

False Comeback (n) The point in a match where the babyface [dfn] begins to regain offense only to quickly be stopped by heel; done to arouse heat [dfn].

Feud (n) A feigned battle or dispute, usually a series of matches, between two or more wrestlers or teams meant to draw fans to an arena or a TV program.

Finish (n) The ending to a match; can include a series of stock encounters that lead up to the pinfall, submission, disqualification, countout, or draw.

Finisher (n) Move that leads to end of match.

Foreign Object (n) An object foreign to a match; a weapon to be used to injure an opponent. (Sometimes jokingly called an "international object" stemming from Ted Turner's policy in the late-'80s of never referring to anything as "foreign," but rather to use the word "international," on television stations he owned; although primarily aimed at CNN, it was picked up by TBS wrestling announcers.)

Gas (n) Steroids.

Gate (n) Amount of money generated from ticket sales.

Geek (v) Cut one's self.

Gig Mark (n) A scar from blading.

Gimmick. (n) 1. The persona, usually artificially created, one has in order to draw fan interest. 2. Slang for a foreign object [dfn].

Gimmicked 1. (v) Slang for hitting someone with a foreign object [dfn]. 2. (adj.) Indicates object has been altered, i.e. "gimmicked chair" would indicate it was altered to break easily when used as a weapon.

Gizzmo (n) Old term for gimmick [dfn].

Go Home (v) Said by one wrestler to another, meaning to go to the finish [dfn.] of a match.

Go Over (v) To beat someone. (also, "put over")

Going Bush (v) Moving from major league, full-time promotion to a regional or independent, i.e. "bush league"; an older term not used often today.

Green Boy (n) Inexperienced wrestler.

Gusher (n) A deep, heavily bleeding cut, usually as a result of blading [dfn]; severity of cut can be intended or unintended.

Handles (n) Names wrestlers use among themselves, sometime real names, usually not their ring name; an older term not often used today.

Hardway (adv.) A type of cut incurred without a razor blade, usually unintentionally.

Heat 1. (n) Crowd noise, can mean specifically boos and jeers, although generally refers to general crowd noise, including cheers and clapping. 2. (slang) To "have heat" with someone is to be in poor standing with them.

Heel (n) The "bad guy" or "villain." The performer whom the promoter books [dfn] in the position of being booed.

Highspot (n) A move, usually aerial, that includes fast motion among two or more wrestler; often risk is involved or at least perceived.

Hood (n) Masked wrestler.

Hot Tag (n) When a battered babyface finally tags fresh partner.

House (n) Number of fans in building, can include non-paying fans.

House Show (n) 1. A card [dfn.] not taped for television. 2. An event in a town visited consistently by the given promotion.

Job (n) A planned, voluntary loss.

Jobber (n) Wrestler who loses, usually on television, to help image of pushed [dfn.] wrestler; preliminary wrestler; one who does jobs [dfn].

Juice (v) To cut oneself in order to draw blood, usually from the forehead. (n) 1. Blood. 2. Slang for steroids or other muscle-enhancing drugs.

Juiced Up (n) 1. To be at the peak of a steroid cycle. 2. To be showing the effects of heavy steroid use.

Kay Fabian (n) Slang term for a mark [dfn.] (See also, Kayfabe).

Kayfabe, Ka-Fabe (n, v, adj.) Dating back to carnival days, this word is used in many contexts, generally referring to the protecting of industry "secrets." (The word is often said by one in the business to indicate everyone around him should stop talking openly because someone not privy to the inner-workings of the business just entered a room. To "kayfabe someone" is to withhold information from them.)

Loose (adj.) To work loose(y) is to be a wrestler who applies holds and maneuvers with less force than average; considered a positive in most situations. Opposite of tight [dfn.]

Mark. (n) A person who believes wrestling matches to be real. (n, slang) A person who believes they are an expert on the wrestling business based on limited knowledge of the inner-workings of the sport (derogatory).

Mark Out. (v, slang) 1. To enthusiastically be into an angle [dfn] or match as if you were "a mark"; to suspend one's disbelief for the sake of enjoying to a greater extent a match or an angle [dfn]. 2. To fall victim to a con.

Marriage. (n) 1. A feud [dfn] between two wrestlers or teams. 2. A series of matches that goes to each town in which a promotion runs live events, sometimes more than once in each town, until the feud is finished.

Marshmallow (n) A fat wrestler; old, rarely used term.

Mouthpiece (n) An on-camera manager.

No-show. (v) To not show up for a scheduled appearance, can refer either to a promoter falsely booking a wrestler or a wrestler missing a scheduled appearance.

Office (n) 1. The headquarters of a wrestling promotion. 2. Slang for the promoter and office workers, source of decisions that affect wrestlers on the road.

Over. (adj.) Popular with intended audience.

Paper (v) To give away tickets to an event, often done to fill seats for television tapings.

Paying Dues (v) General term for gaining experience and showing respect toward veterans; includes in-ring experience, long drives, hard work for low pay.

Pencil. (n) A booker [dfn] or promoter.

Plant (n) A person—sometimes a wrestler, office employee, or friend or relative of employee—in audience who feigns being a fan and participates in angle [dfn].

Policeman (n) A wrestler skillful or strong enough to enforce a promoter's wishes; able and willing to shoot [dfn.] to make a point with unruly opponent; somewhat outdated today.

Pop (v) A rise, usually cheering or booing, out of the crowd.

Post (v) To ram opponent's head into the steel ring post or similar object.

Potato (v) To legitimately, either accidentally or on purpose, hit or execute a move with force on opponent.

Program (n) Same as feud [dfn] or marriage [dfn], including matches, interviews, and angles [dfn].

Promoter (n.) Usually refers to the head of a wrestling company, although can refer to regional promoters who help the head of a company promote events.

Promotion 1. (n) A wrestling company. 2. (v) Hype for an event.

Push (v) The act of beneficially promoting a wrestler on television and through other means in order to gain popularity or recognition, usually through victories, interviews, and features.

Put Over (v) 1. To be "put over" is to get the pinfall victory. To "put someone over" is to get pinned. 2. To compliment someone.

Red (n) Blood.

Rest Hold (n) A hold that takes place during a match that gives wrestlers time to breath between highspots; a hold applied lightly, without pressure.

Road Agent (n) Employee who travels with wrestlers and oversees execution of house shows.

Sauced (n) See "juiced."

Screwjob (adj.) A finish with controversial ending, usually upsetting fans, often inconclusive or unsatisfying; often a reversal against the babyface (derogatory).

Sell (v) To act as if you have been on the receiving end of a legitimate wrestling or fighting maneuver, both in motion and in facial expression.

Sheets (n) Slang for industry trade journals, fan newsletters, results bulletins, fanzines, and fan club bulletins; often used in a derogatory tone. (Of those publications, those which contain "insider" information are also referred to as "kayfabe sheets." Derogatory terms include "dirt sheets" and "scandal sheets.")

Shoot (n, adj.) 1. A work [dfn] that becomes a legitimate wrestling contest or fight. 2. (v, slang) To legitimately hit or hurt one's opponent on purpose. 3. (adj., slang) A comment with some truth behind it.

Shooter (n) One who shoots [dfn] using amateur wrestling skills.

Showing Light (v) Because of flawed execution, to unintentionally expose to fans that a maneuver did not connect, i.e. someone throwing a punch which the opponent sells [dfn] when the punch did not come close to hitting the opponent.

Smack (n) A relatively new slang term for a fan who believes he or she is "smart" [dfn] based on a certain amount of inside knowledge, but is perceived by someone else (usually someone within the industry) to be less informed than the fan himself or herself believes; combination of the words smart [dfn] and mark [dfn].

Smart (n) A person who has knowledge of the inner-workings of the wrestling business.

Soft (adj.) See "loose."

Spot (n) A wrestling move or series of moves.

Spot Show (n) A wrestling event held in a town not visited on a consistent basis by the given promotion.

Squash 1. (n, adj.) A match, usually on television designed to put over [dfn.] a pushed [dfn.] wrestler who dominates offense and beats opponent, usually a jobber [dfn.]. 2. (v) To dominate offense and win a match.

Stiff (adj.) To hit harder or execute holds and moves with more force than most; one who "works [dfn] tight."

Stocking (n) Old terms for masked wrestler.

Stooge 1. (n) Anyone who informs promoter of something wrestlers would prefer to be kept secret, often another wrestler or referee. 2. (v) To tell on someone.

Strap (n) Championship belt.

Stretch (v) To use a legitimate and painful amateur wrestling hold.

Stretched (v) To be injured, sometimes intentionally by opponent.

Stretchered (v) To be carried out on stretcher while feigning an injury suffered during a match or an angle.

Strong Style Wrestling (n) A form of worked [dfn.] wrestling found in Japan that stresses realistic-looking action at the expense of highspots [dfn.]. Sometimes called "shooting," although that's rarely an accurate account of the matches it is referring to.

Submission Hold. (n) 1. A hold that fans believe can lead to the finish of a match via submission. 2. A hold that is meant to invoke high emotion due to being complicated and more devastating-looking than a common rethold.

Swerve (n) 1. A joke pulled by one wrestler on another. 2. A false report by a wrestler or promoter to another wrestler or promoter or a member of the press.

Switch the Heat (v) To pass blame behind the scenes.

Territory (n) 1. The area in which a given promotion runs wrestling matches and airs its television show. 2. (n, slang) Actual territorial wrestling promotion.

Tight (adj) Applications or holds and maneuvers with more force than average; realistic. Can be a negative or

positive quality, depending on the style the opponent prefers. Opposite of loose [dfn.], soft [dfn.]

Top (v) A flip over top rope from inside the ring toward opponent on ring floor (pronounced toe-pay).

Trust (n) An alliance among regional promotions.

Turn (v) To change one's persona from heel [dfn] to babyface [dfn] or from babyface to heel.

Tweens. (n) One who is neither a babyface [dfn] nor a heel [dfn], or is in the process of turning [dfn] from one to another.

Work (n) 1. A rationalized lie 2. Predetermined outcome. (v) To lie, deceive, or mislead someone. 3. (v) To skillfully wrestle.

Worker (n) Wrestler (context is usually positive).

Workrate (n) The pace of a match and the skill level exhibited therein.

Listing of Mail Order Publications

Wrestling Observer Newsletter
P.O. Box 1228
Campbell, CA 95009-1228

For over ten years, the most widely-read insider trade publication on the wrestling industry. A ten page weekly (\$6 for four issues), covers the entire wrestling world, with a particular focus on the United States, Japan and Mexico. Editor Dave Meltzer is considered the foremost outside expert on the professional wrestling industry.

Whatever Happened To...? (c/o Scott Teal)
P.O. Box 2781
Hendersonville, TN 37077-2781

A specialty publication focusing on wrestlers of the past. By far the best nostalgia publication available with all fresh, first-run material and genuine research on the past. For long-time fans, this will reflect on what your favorites did and tell you where they are now.

Wrestling Flyer Newsletter
P.O. Box 83
Wallington, PA 19086

Published about twice per month (\$1.50), this newsletter features an interview in each issue and closes out with the latest news on the WWF, WCW, and the regionals.

Pro Wrestling Sushi
P.O. Box 36189
San Jose, CA 95158

Published about once per month (send \$1 and an SASE for a sample), this features mainly humor on current wrestling news.

Wrestling Perspective
P.O. Box 401
Camillus, NY 13031-0401

Published monthly (\$1.50), this newsletter features primarily editorial essays on current wrestling news plus interviews and nostalgia.

The above listing is of mail order publications that cross my desk regularly that I either recommend or believe are worth a look and that have been around a considerable length of time. There are many more products available through mail order. Mat Marketplace (address listed below) has an exhaustive listing of wrestling mail order stuff and listings of fans who wish to trade correspondence and memorabilia with other fans...

Mat Marketplace
P.O. Box 2371
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130-0020
\$2.50 U.S./\$3 elsewhere (quarterly)

Note to Readers: Please bring to my attention any errors you find in this yearbook, especially the list of real names. Any additions or addendum to the Glossary of Wrestling Terms is also welcome.

